



ACT Policing Annual Report 2002-2003



Working together for a safer community



ACT Policing Annual Report
2002-2003



Working together for a safer community

Commonwealth of Australia 2003

ISSN 1038-1570

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Chief Police Officer for the ACT

John Murray APM BA LLB MBA GCLP

to the Australian Capital Territory

ABN: 17 864 931 143

8 October 2003

Mr Bill Wood MLA
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in submitting the Annual Report regarding policing services in the Australian Capital Territory provided by the Australian Federal Police for the financial year 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003.

This report has been prepared in accordance with paragraphs 6.3 and 7.1 of the Policing Arrangement between the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory Governments.

I hereby certify that the attached Annual Report is an honest and accurate account and that all material information on the operations of ACT Policing during the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003 has been included and that it complies with the Chief Minister's *Annual Report Directions*.

In line with section 14 of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 1995*, I understand that you will cause a copy of the Report to be laid before the Legislative Assembly within six sitting days of receipt.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Murray', is positioned below the 'Yours sincerely' text. The signature is fluid and cursive.

John Murray, APM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Highlights: Our Challenges and Achievements	4
Section 1: Our Organisation	6
Mission	6
Structure	6
Legislative Framework	7
Organisational Change	7
Executive Profiles	9
Organisational Chart	11
Section 2: Performance Reporting	12
Section 2a: Crime and Safety Management	12
Section 2b: Traffic Law Enforcement and Road Safety	38
Section 2c: Crime Prevention	48
Section 2d: Prosecution and Judicial Support	58
Section 2e: Operations Support Services	66
Section 3: Our People	80
Staffing Profile	80
Recruitment	80
Worklife Diversity	81
Women in Policing	82
Australian Workplace Agreements	85
Workplace Accidents and Injuries	85
Compensation Claims	86
Learning and Development	86
Employment Management Plans	89
Command and Control Training	89
Complaints	89
Ombudsman Investigation	90
Volunteers in Policing	90
January Bushfires Crisis	91
Awards	93
Section 4: Whole of Government Issues	96
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reporting	96
Multicultural Framework	97
Customer Focused Public Service	100
Commissioner for the Environment	100
Consultancy and Contractor Services	100
Capital Works Management	101
Asset Management Strategy	101
Public Interest Disclosure	101
Occupational Health and Safety	101
<i>Government (Contractual Debts) Interest Act 1994</i>	102
Assess to AFP Documents	101
Freedom of Information Statement	103
Information Access	105
Certified Agreement Negotiations	105
Contact Numbers for Police Assistance	105
Section 5: Appendices	106
Appendix 1: Financial and Performance Reporting	107
Appendix 2: Reported Offences	124
Appendix 3: Purchase Agreement	128
Appendix 4: Glossary	135
Alphabetical Index	136
Compliance Index	137

HIGHLIGHTS: OUR CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Chief Police Officer for the ACT

The success of community policing is heavily dependent on the strength of the relationship between police officers and the rest of the community. Policing in the ACT has long been characterised by an exceptional level of community cooperation and participation in meeting law enforcement and crime prevention objectives. The 75th year of policing in the ACT is a time for reflection and celebration not only of the many achievements of the men and women who have made up the service but also of the contribution of the ACT community itself.

The outstanding level of cooperation was best exemplified during the January 2003 bushfires. Throughout this extraordinary event, the leadership by our police and other emergency services personnel was complemented by a selfless expression of community spirit and generosity across the ACT by individual citizens who came to the aid of friends and neighbours.

During the 75 years of policing in the ACT, policing executives have worked towards delivering a vision of community policing which meets the needs of the Canberra community and fosters community safety, crime reduction and crime prevention.

Given the challenges associated with policing the national capital, particularly following recent events in New York City and Bali, it would be easy for police to adopt an authoritarian

approach based on traditional responses to threats with an intense focus on enforcement rather than participation. It is my view however, that the more challenging side of policing is working with the community and dealing with problems to create shared solutions. ACT Policing has moved positively in this direction and signed a new agreement with government which is unique not only at the national level, but probably internationally in making the community part of the policing effort.

The new agreement rejects many of the more conventional approaches to managing police performance by focusing 35 per cent of performance measures on what the community tells us. This is done through a survey of over 2000 households each year about community fears, views about police and the propensity of people in the community to commit certain types of offences. The results of this survey are not always what police would like to hear, but this approach to policing is a critical development for the Territory which ensures police are sensitive to the community and not, in some authoritarian way, above the people who we seek to serve. This is a new approach to policing which is being supported over the next three years by a rigorous independent examination of how we work.

This evaluation is funded by the Australian Research Council which has invested \$1.2 million in the project and represents a joint venture between ACT Policing and *Century 21*, a new

research institute of the Australian National University. The study will be led by Professor Peter Grabosky and myself, and undertaken by a team of highly qualified experts with international police research experience. I can only observe in this, our 75th year of policing in the ACT, that while so many things remain the same, so many others are very different because an initiative of this type would have been unthought of in years gone by.

It has been a mixed year for policing in the ACT. The overall result for the year saw offence levels increase from 42 774 in 2001-2002 to over 47 000 in 2002-2003. The source of this resurgence in crime was the emergence of significant increases in property related offences during the first half of the year with an average of 44 stolen motor vehicle offences and 133 burglary offences each week. These levels compared unfavourably with the previous financial year and began to stretch police resources to a point where the development of alternative strategies was required to manage the volume of these offences.

This situation prompted ACT Policing to significantly restructure and refocus its approach to the management of property offences within the Territory. This was done by transferring resources from patrol activity to a program exclusively focused on targeting the sources of crime in conjunction with strong crime prevention initiatives to create a pattern of sustained police activity.



Chief Police Officer for the ACT, Mr John Murray.

HISTORICAL

Policing in the ACT has taken a variety of forms since the inception of the Peace Officer Guards in September 1927. The Peace Officer Guards comprised just 10 members and the service has evolved and grown through several name changes including the ACT Police, which amalgamated with the Commonwealth Police in 1979. Community policing in the ACT is now conducted by the ACT Policing arm of the Australian Federal Police and employs more than 800 personnel.



The successful introduction of *Operation Halite* during the reporting period demonstrated the impact intelligence-led policing can have on reducing crime in the Territory. *Operation Halite* has combined enforcement and preventative methodologies in reducing property related crime. *Operation Halite* also targets the underlying sources of property related crime, including drug related crime, in an effort to introduce long term solutions. Throughout this operation, ACT Policing has worked in partnership with the community to address vulnerabilities to crime through target hardening, environmental design, community awareness and education. In taking this broad approach, the operation has been very successful consolidating the earlier impact of enforcement based operations used over the past three years to reverse the ten year growth in crime within the Territory.

Operation Halite saw a reversal of the earlier trend with drops in property related crime across the Territory, seeing the steady increase in weekly motor vehicle theft offences stabilise and burglary rates fall to 99 per week. This result was however, achieved at some cost to patrol activity and this is an area I intend to examine over the next 12 months.

ACT Policing's emphasis on crime prevention and aligning the fear of crime with the actuality of crime, has also given us an opportunity to focus on those areas of the community which may experience social isolation. During the reporting period, ACT Policing has been particularly active in reaching out to the local Islamic community to provide reassurance in the turbulent times leading up to, during and after the war in Iraq. In working toward improving perceptions of the quality of policing services, it is imperative that policing policies and initiatives are inclusive and relevant to all members of the community and that we maintain sufficient flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of Canberrans.

I am pleased to report significant developments in road safety over the past 12 months. Every year families are devastated in the Territory by motor vehicle accidents which result in people being injured or killed due to the preventable actions of others. ACT Policing has contributed to reductions in motor vehicle related accidents and injuries by an aggressive intelligence led campaign which not only seeks to deter serious motor vehicle offenders but also arrest and actively prosecute them before the courts. The ACT now

has amongst the highest, if not the highest, strike rate in the country for detection of persons who drink and drive. This campaign will continue over the next year with the objective of protecting all Canberrans from the risk of injury or death on the roads.

The next year is likely to be one of great challenge for communities just like Canberra all over the world. The men and women of ACT Policing work to protect Canberra residents and visitors to the best of their ability. In order to achieve this goal police will need the support and cooperation of the community. I urge readers to adopt a position of tolerance and consideration over this time, taking care not to marginalise individuals or groups who must also be embraced and protected as part of our community.

I look forward to the next 12 months and acknowledge the enormous contribution made by the community in support of police, and the challenges presented in working to maintain Canberra as the safest city in Australia.

John Murray APM

Chief Police Officer