

## Section 1



## Chief Executive Review

### Major Issues, Challenges and Achievements for the Reporting Year

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the ACT Policing Annual Report for the year 2003–2004. Following my appointment as Chief Police Officer on 16 February 2004, I undertook an examination of the policing and crime environment of the ACT. I am impressed by the professionalism exhibited by the women and men of ACT Policing. Their dedicated commitment to serving the community and their resolve to curb crime has seen rising crime trends in the ACT, that were on an upward spiral for over a decade, 'pegged back' for the fourth year in a row. I note however that this effort, while preventing a return to further systemic growth in crime levels, has not translated into systemic reductions in crime. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work and leadership displayed by my predecessor Mr John Murray APM and my Executive Team.

My first hand experience over the past five months has shown that the crime environment in the ACT is characterised by resurgences in crime levels to which police must be ever alert. This year offence levels remained high for the first six months and early projections indicated an end of year result which would have been higher than the previous year.



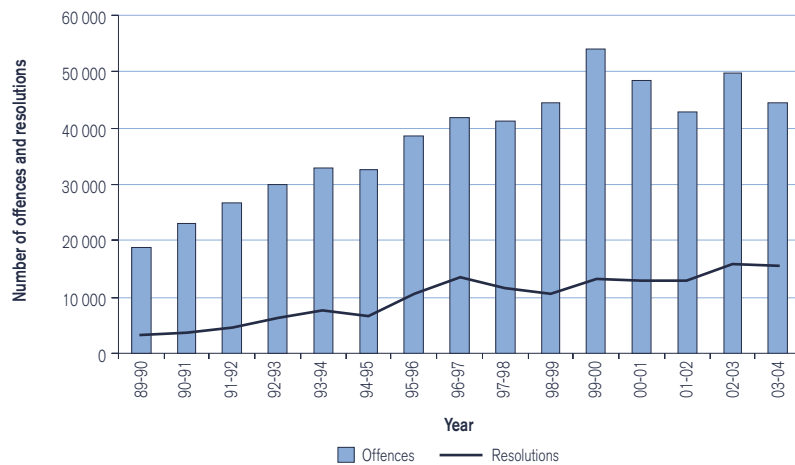
*Deputy Commissioner, John Davies APM OAM*

ACT Policing launched a number of targeted operations and initiatives in the second half of the financial year which were designed to inundate the crime problem in the ACT and attack it simultaneously from a number of perspectives. Operations including *Logwood*, *Fearless* and *City Safe* were designed to produce a reduction in offence levels by year's end. I am pleased to report this outcome was achieved in cooperation with other areas of the AFP.

This ability to capitalise on other parts of the AFP in such circumstances is a unique feature of the Policing Arrangement for the ACT. The nation's smallest police service would otherwise lack the flexibility necessary to reconfigure its operational focus and expand at short notice to provide a definitive response to emerging crime trends.

At a more detailed level I have been concerned by the long term increase

**Figure 1.1: Offence and Resolution Levels 1989–1990 to 2003–2004**



Source: ACT Policing Annual Reports 1989–1990 to 2001–2002 and PROMIS as at 2 July 2004. Drug offences included from 1999–2000. Previous year's figures exclude drug offences.

in offences against the person in the ACT which nonetheless remain amongst the lowest in Australia. This trend is disturbing. Canberra's traditionally low level of offences against the person is to be valued and maintained for the benefit of the entire community. At the most extreme end of this problem I am concerned that four murders committed in the ACT between 1999–2000 and the present remain unsolved. I regard this as a serious matter and while I recognise the complexity of these offences where perpetrators have gone to great lengths to conceal their identities, I intend that ACT Policing will review investigations to date. I wish to reassure the community that AFP investigators will continue to pursue these matters. I encourage any member of the community who can help in identifying these offenders or provide information in respect of any other criminal or suspicious activity to contact the AFP through Crime Stoppers which is a confidential means of providing information to assist police.

### Overview of ACT Policing Performance and Financial Results

The total number of offences reported in the ACT fell by just over 10 per cent in 2003–2004 compared with the previous year. There were significant decreases in rates of assault and burglaries from shops. Motor vehicle theft rates fluctuated throughout the year with the most significant reductions occurring in the fourth quarter. It is pleasing to note the end of year result was an overall reduction of seven per cent. Rates of household burglary and sexual assault increased by seven and six per cent respectively with the most notable increases occurring in rates of armed and unarmed robbery which both increased by in excess of 20 per cent on the previous reporting period. While these results are mixed, I can report that performance in the second half of the financial year considerably improved on early results due in part to an increase in the number of staff available

to perform community policing duties and the impact of associated operations referred to above. These initiatives enabled an intensive focus on property related crimes during the later half of the reporting period. Full details of these initiatives and associated results are described in the body of this report.

In the context of fluctuations in our staffing position throughout the reporting period, ACT Policing's performance against Purchase Agreement Outcomes was overall very sound. Performance targets were met or exceeded in relation to 25 of 37 performance measures. Police pressure on property crime and crimes against the person resulted in solid performance against both measures with reported rates for these offence categories being below the target levels by six and nine per cent respectively. Clearance rates for both crime types were also significantly in excess of targets set at 65.7 per cent for person offences and 16.4 per cent for property offences.

First tier priority response targets were met across all priority response categories during 2003–2004. Analysis of Computer Aided Dispatch system records indicates that failure to achieve second tier response times was principally attributable to all patrol resources being fully committed at the time additional incidents were reported. This is an ongoing area of concern for ACT Policing and for the community with every effort being made to ensure that high priority incidents are responded to without delay. Performance in this area will continue to be closely monitored in 2004–2005.

The ACT continues to have higher than average rates of people who self-report to driving over the speed limit and driving under the influence of alcohol. These trends are of significant concern to ACT Policing and are indicative of a level of complacency within the community which must be addressed. ACT Policing employed proactive traffic management measures during 2003–2004 which included targeted breath testing to ensure that the likelihood of non-compliant drivers being intercepted by police was as high as possible. This resulted in the highest strike rate for alcohol breath testing in Australia.

I am pleased to report that the rates of general satisfaction with police professionalism and perceptions of safety remain positive in the ACT with the only area of significant concern being the public perception of a lack of police support for community programs. ACT Policing performed significantly below the national average in this respect and is actively seeking to improve this result in 2004–2005. Work has commenced with Neighbourhood Watch in

this regard and involvement with programs such as the Police Scouts, RecLink and the Police and Citizens Youth Clubs will continue into the new reporting period.

ACT Policing's financial performance was also very sound with the overall end of year budget result reflecting an underspend of approximately \$712 000. This underspend arose from revenue issues and late recognition of accrual matters.

## Outlook for the Coming Year

The outlook for 2004–2005 is one of further challenges in relation to crime management and community security. ACT Policing is currently developing a new crime management response for 2004–2005 which will see *Operation Halite* replaced by a new and expanded crime task force. This will result in staff reductions in other areas of ACT Policing but this is regarded as a necessary measure to capitalise on the gains made in the later stages of the reporting period. The new crime strategy will involve a major team with fully integrated criminal intelligence and crime prevention personnel who will target repeat property offenders and criminals responsible for the distribution of drugs in the ACT. I will report regularly on the work of this team throughout 2004–2005.

The Specialist Response and Security Group has continued to develop as a highly credible response to security concerns over the past 12 months. Specialist Response and Security will be involved in a number of national and international commitments over the next 12 months which will further enhance its capabilities.

The Joint Study of Policing will also commence early in the new year and a major focus of this group will be the resourcing of ACT Policing. I look forward to the opportunity to work with this group and examine a range of capability issues as they currently affect ACT Policing.

In line with our communication strategy, ACT Policing is developing customer service training which recognises that people judge police through their direct and indirect contact with our services. This exercise is crucial in establishing and maintaining a professional and credible policing presence with the government and community. As an agency supporting the work of the community, ACT Policing cannot underestimate how important it is that policing services are delivered in a professional manner.

I face the next 12 months with a feeling of excitement. Rather than portend major structural changes, I intend to lead ACT Policing through an evolutionary process that must logically follow the realignments that we have experienced over the last few years. Wholesale change is not required but rather an absorption of lessons learnt and a consolidation of strategic policy direction. To this end I remain firmly committed to a whole of government approach utilising consultative mechanisms to not only engage the public, but also include all stakeholders in the way we police the ACT.