To maintain our reputation as a progressive and capable law enforcement agency, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) is constantly adapting to an ever-changing global environment. There are few areas changing more rapidly than in the communications space and it is crucial that we remain at the forefront of meeting this ongoing challenge.

An organisation is often judged on its ability to communicate. The AFP can take great pride in the way we have engaged with each other and with our target audiences in the past, but we can always do better.

I view our communications as a key capability in support of our work on behalf of the Australian community and now, more than ever, we need to demonstrate an adaptable, responsive, flexible and innovative approach to how we share our messages. The importance of how we communicate also came through strongly in the 2015 staff survey and this Strategy is a direct response to the feedback we received.

The AFP Communications Strategy 2016-2018 outlines how the AFP can enhance its communications capability to best position itself as a trusted law enforcement agency. It foreshadows a particular focus on adopting new and innovative communications measures in the future. The Strategy’s key goals and objectives align with the AFP Future Directions Project which recognises the need to continue to strive to meet our future challenges.

I thank and commend all who have contributed to this Strategy which is the result of consultation across the AFP, the Australian Government, including the Minister for Justice’s Office, and communications specialists.

I encourage all members of the AFP to embrace this Strategy and its overarching objectives. We all have a role to play in ensuring we remain at the forefront of Australia’s law enforcement and national security efforts, but also that we continue to project a strong and consistent message about the significant work we all do to make our nation a safer and more secure place to live.

AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin
The AFP’s role

The AFP is the Australian Government’s leading law enforcement agency. Its role is to enforce Commonwealth criminal law, contribute to combating organised crime and protect Commonwealth interests from criminal activity in Australia and overseas as a key member of the national security community.

Vision*

To fight crime together and win.

Mission*

To provide dynamic and effective law enforcement to the people of Australia.

Core values

Our Core Values represent the organisation’s principles and standards. They are fundamental to the way the AFP does business.

INTEGRITY
COMMITMENT
EXCELLENCE
ACCOUNTABILITY
FAIRNESS
TRUST
RESPECT

* The AFP’s vision and mission statements are currently being reviewed. Revised versions will be included in this document when ratified.
The AFP strives to maintain an effective, best-practice communications capability, to support our people and our operations.

Intent and purpose

From 2016-2018, the AFP will reflect world’s best practice by significantly enhancing our communications capability and, in so doing, remain the Australian Government’s most trusted source of advice on domestic and international policing matters.

Over the next two years, we will employ the most contemporary communications practices and continue to review and refresh our approach, based on the evolving communications landscape.

Our stakeholders and the broader Australian community will trust that all information sourced directly from the AFP is true and accurate. Our communications platforms will be utilised to publish and promote this central source of truth.

The AFP’s story and our unique law enforcement role will be at the heart of all communications activities, and a strong alignment with the organisation’s Vision, Mission and Core Values will be at the centre of everything we communicate.
Setting the scene

The AFP has a trusted reputation and brand, though evidence suggests we can increase our engagement with external audiences. As flagged in the 2015 staff survey, there is also room for improvement in how the AFP reaches out to its own staff.

Effective communications can offer significant benefits for an organisation. Failure to communicate in a timely and effective manner creates an information ‘vacuum’ which can be damaging and lead to criticism and a lack of confidence.

In supporting the development of an organisational communications Strategy, the AFP’s Strategic Leaders’ Group described its principle objective as ‘assisting the AFP in developing an enduring, positive narrative that would exist beyond the daily news cycle’.

A broad consultation process was conducted to help inform this Strategy. Feedback identified that we need to:

- Proactively position the AFP as the Australian Government’s leading law enforcement agency with government, partners and other stakeholders
- Build staff confidence in the executive group with clear, honest and transparent internal communications
- Utilise multiple communications mediums to tell our story with priority given to new and emerging communications
- Tailor communications so they meet the requirements of a range of stakeholders

Through the implementation of this Strategy ineffective channels will be decommissioned making way for a more engaging communications framework.

The AFP Communications Strategy 2016-2018 provides a whole-of-organisation approach to guide how the organisation engages with internal and external audiences. It aligns with the four priority areas for the organisation as identified by the Strategic Leaders’ Group and affirmed through the AFP Future Directions project.

▸ International operations
▸ National and international coordination
▸ Complex serious and organised crime investigations
▸ Specialist skills and capability

This Strategy will guide the AFP in enhancing its overall communications capability. It will remain a ‘living document’ which provides the flexibility to respond to new, innovative opportunities to engage with key stakeholders and a broader national and international audience.

The AFP’s communications specialists will lead the delivery of the Strategy, however, all AFP staff have a role to play in ensuring key objectives are met by applying its principles and seeking opportunities for improved engagement both inside and outside the organisation. This Strategy will be most effective if it is organisationally driven, not solely communications driven.
Building on a strong platform

The AFP Communications Strategy 2016-2018 builds on the organisation’s significant communications achievements to date. These include:

▸ A strong, proud and recognisable corporate brand
▸ An enhanced, accessible and adaptable AFP website
▸ Leading other law enforcement and government agencies in growing a strong and effective digital/social media profile
▸ In-house specialist communications skills and experience.
While the AFP has strong brand recognition, there is a lack of understanding of what the AFP does. A strong and consistently communicated identity will help the AFP to shape, inform and influence stakeholders.

The AFP’s biggest asset is its people. Effective internal communications builds a greater sense of organisational purpose and pride.

External communications
External communications is no longer just about broadcasting a message. It needs to encourage a response and facilitate a two-way conversation. Information must be delivered in shorter timeframes than ever before and the AFP must be able to communicate quickly and effectively in response to emerging issues.

By basing our communications activities on the following common principles, we will strengthen our brand and build on the significant progress already achieved.

Accurate, quick and clear
The provision of accurate information is vital and we need to be able to communicate in a timely manner. Our language must be simple, easy to understand and balanced. We should use plain English and avoid policing jargon.

Accountable
Everyone has a responsibility to share the AFP’s story and we are all accountable for helping to build the organisation’s reputation through our engagement with stakeholders and the community.

On message, strategic and consistent
At all times, our communications will reflect the AFP’s Vision, Mission and Core Values. Aligning with our strategic narrative will ensure we are all telling the same story. A consistent approach to our communications builds trust and confidence.

Open and honest
We will be open and speak the truth. We will communicate — both internally and externally — with honesty and transparency, while protecting sensitive and operational information.

Proactive and innovative
We will lead rather than follow and seek out new ways of telling our story to our audiences, current and potential.
Key messages

In all our communications, it is important to clearly define exactly what messages we want to deliver. The AFP’s key messages underpin our corporate strategic narrative and promote our identity. They include:

▸ The AFP is Australia’s primary national policing and law enforcement agency
▸ We protect Australians and Australian interests, here and overseas
▸ We target serious, complex and transnational crime domestically and internationally
▸ We coordinate, lead and support domestic and international investigations in partnership with a wide range of law enforcement, intelligence and national security partners
▸ We meet current and future challenges through an innovative and intelligent workforce
▸ We embrace specialist skills and capabilities to enable best-practice policing
▸ Our operational capability and performance is amongst the world’s best and something we are proud of
▸ We believe in integrity, commitment, excellence, accountability, fairness, trust and respect
▸ We support a workplace culture that is safe, diverse, fair, accountable and supportive
▸ We are adaptable and engaged with current and future trends
▸ We uphold and honour the values of Australia’s diverse community
▸ We will continue to challenge the paradigm of traditional policing methods and encourage innovation and best-practice in everything we do.

Our audiences

This Strategy identifies the importance of aligning our communications and engaging with our key stakeholder groups. These include:

- Australian community
- Australian Government and parliament
- External stakeholders, including other Australian law enforcement agencies and international partners
- News media
- Private sector
- AFP staff
- News media
- Private sector
- AFP staff
- Australian Government and parliament
- External stakeholders, including other Australian law enforcement agencies and international partners
- Australian community

Keeping our senior management group and the Minister’s Office regularly updated on high-profile and/or sensitive issues will be regarded as standard business practice.
The AFP has a distinct corporate style, reflecting one organisation with multiple roles and perspectives. Our brand is strong and professional and must be used consistently in our communications activities.

To maintain brand integrity and consistency, the AFP Visual Identity Guide 2016 has been developed. All AFP communications material must adhere to this guide.

All design material is managed by the AFP design team which oversees the appropriate use of colour, typography, imagery, texture and language in our communications.
Use of social media

The extraordinary global adoption of social media in recent years has changed the way organisations and the public engage with each other. The AFP is one of the fastest-growing Australian Government agencies using social media.

Social media is increasingly the central communications vehicle for law enforcement organisations around the world. It gives a voice to anyone with an internet connection and offers the AFP direct access to the community and other stakeholders.

Social media is essential when communicating during an emergency or major incident. It also allows us to disseminate messages quickly and accurately, and to debunk myths and rumours with authority.

We will explore new opportunities for engagement with a bigger audience, beyond Facebook and Twitter. We will seek regular engagement and a two-way conversation, steering away from utilising our channels principally as broadcast tools.

The use of Content Driven Marketing to tell our story will be key to our success, using this best-practice, cost-effective approach to future engagement.

Content Driven Marketing involves the creation and sharing of valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience.

A separate Social Media Strategy will complement the AFP Communications Strategy 2016-2018.

Content Driven Marketing focuses on the creation and distribution of content that is interesting, relevant and reliable. Content is shared via the organisation’s own online channels, including social media and the AFP website. This strategic approach leads to increased engagement with audiences.
Our voices

Facebook
AFP engages daily with online audiences through its Facebook page.

Platypus Magazine
AFP Platypus magazine is the AFP’s flagship corporate publication on high-end policing excellence. The magazine is currently published online three times per year.

The Hub
The Hub is the AFP’s intranet, where all staff obtain information, news and resources relevant to their job and workplace.

AFP website
The AFP website is the trusted source of truth for the public seeking general information, news, employment and police checks.

Twitter
AFP manages two Twitter “handles” to broadcast stories and messages with an audience which chooses to follow this social media channel.
Considering audiences with diverse needs

With both internal and external audiences, consideration must be given to people with diverse needs and accessibility issues. These include people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences, the LGBTI community, and those impacted by geographical isolation.

Review and evaluation

Given the ever-changing nature of communications it is important to regularly review our communications efforts to ensure they are continuing to meet the needs of the organisation.

To enable us to measure our progress, benchmarking of our existing communications capability is an important first step.

This Strategy will also be evaluated annually for its currency and effectiveness in achieving the AFP’s communication objectives.

Did you know...
- We started in 1996 with two people out of City Station and now have more than 250 members.
- In 2010 the AFP became a Foundation member of Pride in Diversity, an organisation which ensures workplaces support LGBTI staff.
- In 2012 the AFP was ranked second in the Australian Workplace Equality Index Awards for the public sector.
- In 2014 the AFP was named as the highest-ranking public sector employer in advocating for LGBTI employees.

Interested in joining the GLLO Network? Visit the Hub for more information.