

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

PLATYPUS

MAGAZINE



Rising to the occasion
AFP members reflect on rising to the challenge
two years after the tragedy of MH17

Finding Kathleen
Canberra's Kathleen Bautista's survival
was nothing short of a miracle

On top of the world
Federal Agent Fraser McKenzie was a long way
from on top of the world when an earthquake
struck the slopes of Mount Everest

OCTOBER 2016



The platypus has been adopted by the Australian Federal Police as a symbol representing the diverse requirements placed on members in the execution of their duties.

This unique and tenacious Australian animal is a survivor against increasing pressure from today's environment. It leaves no stone unturned in its daily pursuits and has equipped itself with a range of features to adapt to changes over many years.

It is capable of passing unnoticed if required, yet it demonstrates an unfailing dedication to explore all possibilities in an effort to maintain its special place in Australia's environment.

Although generally a peaceful animal, the platypus is able to defend itself, if necessary, with a venomous spur. This is done, at times, against larger and more powerful opponents—a quality admired and respected by members of the Australian Federal Police.

Editions of Platypus are now also available online at platypus.rvrapid.com



AFP
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE



Cover image: AFP is a diverse and varied organisation.

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Sacrifice remembered

Seven new names were added to the National Police Memorial on National Police Remembrance Day in Canberra.

Law enforcement members paused on 29 September to remember the sacrifice of fallen police officers at the 2016 National Police Remembrance Day (NPRD).

It was the 10th anniversary service at the National Police Memorial and the ceremony was particularly poignant for the NSW Police Force who has lost two members since NPRD 2015.

Touchstones for NSW Sergeant Geoffrey Graham Richardson and Mr Curtis Cheng were added to the National Police Memorial Wall along with five retrospective touchstones spanning 1894–2014.

AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin thanked attendees and noted that 17 Australians have died in the service to their agencies since the inaugural ceremony.

“No matter in which era of Australia’s law enforcement history they served, the qualities of each of those named on this wall has included their commitment, ability and belief in the job they do for their communities,” Commissioner Colvin said.

The new touchstones brought the number of police officers who have died in the line of duty since policing began in Australia to 764.

Sergeant Geoffrey Richardson, an 18-year veteran of the NSW Police Force died in a motor vehicle accident in the Hunter Valley near Maitland on 5 March this year.

Sergeant Richardson was en route to assist colleagues engaged in a pursuit.

Mr Curtis Cheng died when he was fatally shot in an attack at NSW Police Force headquarters on 2 October 2015. His addition to the memorial was unanimously supported by all Australian police jurisdictions.

The service also acknowledged the sacrifice of the officers being added to the memorial through the historical nomination process.

Queensland Police Senior Constable Henry Fetherston died on 23 February 1885 from injuries when he fell from his horse during the execution of his duties.

Queensland Police Constable Benjamin Ebbitt died on 10 May 1894 from injuries as a result of an assault four years earlier.

Queensland Police Sergeant Thomas Heaney died on 27 September 1906 from head injuries inflicted on him while making an arrest.

Tasmania Police Constable Kenneth Shaw died on 8 November 1982 from complications caused by an injury he received while making an arrest.

Northern Territory Senior Constable First Class Michael Read died on 5 December 2014 from a heart attack several days after becoming ill during police training.

Commissioner's Message



It is heartwarming for me as Commissioner that job satisfaction is most often mentioned when I talk to people in the AFP. The AFP is called on to do important work that is at the core of Australia's national interests. The high standards and reputation of the AFP is a reflection on the people in the AFP family that accomplish this work.

This edition highlights just some of the people in the AFP and the extraordinary achievements that emerge from the AFP team. It is important that we recognise achievements – and there are many formal awards that do reward individual and collaborative efforts. But sometimes the best award is an email, a pat on the back from a colleague or supervisor and the simple recognition and self-awareness of a job well done.

Of course, there is always more to do. On 22 August, former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick and I released *Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police*. It is not an easy document for me to read. While the report identifies many positives, it also identifies that there is still a need to change the culture of the AFP to reflect a modern, progressive and inclusive organisation.

The lead feature for this edition articulates the AFP's first steps to chart a course for the future. Assistant Commissioner Ray Johnson will head the new Reform, Culture and Standards Division for the job ahead. I know that the organisation wants change, and I am also sure that the AFP is equal to the challenge. This work is critical to the success of the AFP.

We have a great foundation to build on. The extended features on Operation Arew demonstrate the quality and commitment of our people. Now more than two years on from the MH17 tragedy in the Ukraine, the articles reflect on the challenging circumstances that AFP members faced. It is important to note that we are still there and contributing to the investigation.

This edition also highlights some incredible milestones in the lives of AFP members. Congratulations are in order for Federal Agent Fraser McKenzie who achieved his personal ambition to reach the summit of Mt Everest. Congratulations also go to Sydney Office member Natasha Horne who achieved a world record with Australian team, the Veloroos, in the 4828km Race Across America.

We should, rightly, feel proud of these diverse achievements – and the positive messages they send about our organisation, both at home and abroad. The future AFP will continue to be an inclusive place, a safe place – where talent and dedication are encouraged and rewarded.

As we actively set out to enhance the diversity of our workforce and build on our capabilities, let us embrace the challenging, the unfamiliar, the uncomfortable, because – put it plainly – it is the right thing to do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Colvin'.

Commissioner Andrew Colvin

Work starts immediately to implement culture reform recommendations



Just weeks after the release of a comprehensive study into diversity and inclusion within the AFP, Commissioner Andrew Colvin, has thanked staff for their initial response to its findings.

On 22 August 2016, the Commissioner publicly released *Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police*, the result of extensive consultation with AFP members across the breadth of the organisation, by the former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick.

“I said at the time I released the report, this is not an easy document to read for someone who loves this organisation as much as I do,” the Commissioner said. “I know so many others who feel the same and I’ve seen a full range of responses, from disgust and disbelief, to a determination for change.

“While the report contains many positives, it also identifies our culture is in need of significant change, to reflect a modern, progressive and inclusive workplace.

“It would have been much easier to have kept the report under wraps but that wouldn’t have been true to what I am determined to achieve while I lead this organisation.

“I want the report to mark a moment in time when the AFP leaves behind outdated practices and behaviours, and it becomes an exemplar – even a leading light – for other workplaces to follow.”

The Commissioner and the AFP Executive has committed to respond positively to all 24 recommendations in the *Cultural Change Report*.

“My apology to those members, past and present, who have been let down by this organisation, was heartfelt, and I’ve been made aware that the release of the report has been an important first step in the healing process.”



Elizabeth Broderick and AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin release *Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police* on 22 August.



Assistant Commissioner Ray Johnson has been appointed to head up a new function, Reform, Culture and Standards, to lead the cultural reform process.

Assistant Commissioner Ray Johnson has been appointed to head up a new function, Reform, Culture and Standards, to lead the cultural reform process.

The Safe Place and Investigations Team is providing support to people who have suffered sexual harassment or bullying and to give them reassurance that their concerns will be treated with respect, sensitivity and confidentiality.

“In speaking with Ray and his team recently I made it clear that the job ahead is a big one and the changes we need to put in place will take years, not months,” the Commissioner said.

“I’ve asked Ray and his team to put in place a plan that is workable, achievable and that the whole of the AFP can have confidence in as we move forward.

“Liz Broderick’s strong advice was that we respond to her findings in a considered way. It is important that we get the response right, rather than rushing to fix everything by Christmas which is simply impossible to achieve.

“My sense, from the overwhelming feedback I’ve received to date, is that the organisation wants change, but that

will take a great deal of commitment, from all of us, and at all levels.

“My message to Ray and his team really translates to the entire organisation. We need trust; in each other, in the process and in our management, to stay the full journey – a journey I expect will take many years.”

The Commissioner thanked staff, based in Australia and overseas, for engaging so early in discussions about the findings of the *Cultural Change Report*.

“Ultimately, I want everyone to feel they are in a position that they understand the report and its recommendations and that we all own it.”

For additional information and support email AFP-safe-place-and-investigations@afp.gov.au.
Hotline 6131 2828 (external) 142 828 (internal)

If you require psychological support, please contact Psychological Services on (02) 6131 3743 or the AFP Employee Assistance Program provider, Davidson Trahaire Corpysch on 1300 260 364 www.davcorp.com.au.



Rising to the occasion

AFP members reflect on rising to the challenge of Operation Arew two years after the tragedy of MH17.

Detective Superintendent Anthony Fox exited his taxi, grabbed his bag and walked toward the Schiphol airport, destination Dubai. He joined the throng of people making their way to someplace else. Head down and lost in his own thoughts, he gently nudged into the person who had stopped in front of him. He looked up and there at the entrance of Amsterdam's main airport was a sea of flowers 10 metres deep and 50 metres long.

It was only then that the full reality of the MH17 tragedy hit home. He had watched the news coverage of Malaysia Airlines flight on 17 July from his position as Senior Liaison

Officer in Dubai – never thinking he would be deployed. But in one of those strange twists, he was to be the first AFP member to deploy to the crash site in Ukraine.

Anthony got the call to deploy at 11am Dubai time on 20 July. As far removed as Dubai may be from Ukraine, Anthony was one of the closest AFP members that could deploy as soon as possible. Less than 24 hours later he was in Kiev at 7.40am on 21 July. It was the beginning of two weeks of little sleep; a fluid operational, military and political situation that could change at any time, and frustrating attempts accessing the crash site.



Detective Superintendent Anthony Fox, at left, was the first AFP member to access the crash site.

“I just got on the ground – what I wanted to do and perceived my role being was to understand the situation in Kiev and Donetsk and to get down to the crash site as soon as we could,” Detective Superintendent Fox says.

“Essentially, it was a reconnaissance to assess what equipment, people and resources we would need, understanding the security situation and who we would need to build relationships with to complete the task and then reporting this back to AFP Kiev and Headquarters.”

Surreal

It was to be an experience quite unlike anything the AFP had yet encountered. At one time, shelling and automatic rifle fire would be just a kilometre away, and shelling could be heard and felt at the accommodation at night. Then there was the uncertainty and frustration gaining access to the crash site or how much time in each of the

five main crash sites he would have. Delays often would prevent gaining access to the sites when ceasefire timings were missed.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was negotiating access to the crash site with the Ukraine and pro-Russian forces in the conflict zone. The OSCE also was to provide logistic support for the AFP, whilst Donetsk People’s Republic militia provided security.

“There’s all that going on in the background,” Anthony says. “If you had run this situation as a [Management of Serious Crime course] scenario no one would believe you.

“That you are going into a conflict zone, you are going to have to negotiate between government forces and rebels, you have to identify a crash site that is 50km² across five main sites – you have to go in there and identify what you need and how you’re going to do it – people would think you’re mad.”

“If you had run this situation as a [Management of Serious Crime course] scenario no one would believe you.”

On 24 July, Anthony was one of three Australians permitted to enter the crash zone. The small group was escorted through the check points by the OSCE to Donetsk. At the last check point on the Ukrainian side they waited in the vehicle line to cross to the pro-Russian side and onto the crash site. The vehicle in front was being checked for identification.

“There were a lot of Ukrainian military and militia walking around with Soviet-style weapons. This guy came and looked in the window and checked our identification. We were in dedicated OSCE vehicles – so we were okay.

“The guy that checked our ID looks out across this field. I could see him looking at something. He was right beside my window. Then he brought up his AK47 and started shooting off into the paddock. We weren’t quite sure what he was shooting at – whether it was a rebel, rabbit, who knows?”

The first day at the five crash sites was a blur of activity and photography. Anthony had been briefed on what shrapnel from a warhead looked like and that was what he was looking for in particular. With a GPS enabled camera, he captured photographs and video images of the landscape of the scenes, specific items of aircraft wreckage and human remains. The group was instructed, however, that they were not to remove anything from the sites.

“It was pretty surreal,” Anthony says. “The countryside is beautiful, these beautiful big country fields of sunflowers. As I found out later Ukraine produces 60 per cent of the world’s sunflower oil.

“But then the first crash site we arrived at was where the tail and part of the fuselage were. Seeing that lying on the ground when you know it should be up in the air, that it should form part of a plane in one piece – it was quite surreal.”

Site 5 contained an engine and wing section of the aircraft. Just 50 metres away at a crossroad lived “the world’s luckiest Ukrainian farmer”. He and his wife were having a meal when they heard an explosion. He rushed outside

with her and saw debris falling from the sky. “He saw the flaming wings coming down like a pendulum and it came down literally 50 metres from his house,” Anthony says. “It is unreal how nothing hit him.”

Adaptable

On 25 July, five Australian representatives were allowed access to the site. Federal Agent Hilda Sirec joined Anthony at the crash sites. Like Anthony, less than 24 hours after watching the coverage on television she found herself in Kiev.

As law enforcement officers, each AFP investigator had to adapt to the professional frustrations of an extremely unorthodox crime scene. Not only was it spread over a large distance, but there was no security in place to maintain the integrity of the evidence. Pieces of the fuselage had been moved into a central area and people could roam freely among the sites.

She says the magnitude of the task was huge and came with a heavy responsibility to the task and to the families of those who lost loved ones. “We all just wanted to do the best job we could,” Hilda says.

“It was a surreal experience for those people departing Australia, London and Dubai who had seen the wall-to-wall news saturation and then land in rural Ukraine.

“You try and look at it clinically as well as a law enforcement officer. There’s an investigation to be done and that is probably the best way to achieve those immense responsibilities you feel—get there and do the job. Identify the possibilities and opportunities and address that.

“We looked at all the belongings and we know that they belonged to someone who has died on that plane but equally that helps to identify an individual and give solace to other families who are working with a lot less information and only dealing with what they see on television and that would be far more harrowing.”

Federal Agent Hilda Sirec photographs impact evidence on a section of the MH17.



One of the first opportunities came at 12.45pm on 25 July at Site 1. Anthony located a piece of what appeared to be aircraft fuselage and noticed what appeared to be olive-green coloured metal fragments embedded in the fuselage. He took photographs of the item in situ and collected three pieces of the metal fragments, placing them in a clear plastic bag. He showed the fragments to Hilda, who at the time of deployment was a part-time AFP bomb technician.

At a small village near crash site 2, an important part of the cockpit fuselage was located. Hilda says this particular piece of the fuselage was to be one of the most contentious pieces of the destroyed aircraft.

“That piece of fuselage had signature markings that would be consistent with fragmentation damage, which somewhat

corroborates the allegation that the plane was brought down by a missile. So I was obviously taking photos and taking some measurements that I could from that.”

Hilda says that despite the challenges it was about supporting the mission. “I know it sounds clichéd – but it really was a Team Australia effort,” she says.

“I just feel extremely privileged to be part of Op Arew. I don’t think I will do anything else quite like this. It was clearly one of the most standout things in my career. I just hope that we get some gains with the final investigation and it gives [the families of victims] some peace and solace from the efforts made to get those answers.”

Ukraine emergency services remove bodies from the debris of MH17.







“We hope we don’t have to go into a situation like that ever again – deploy to the middle of a conflict zone. But it may happen again,” Anthony says. “If it does I am confident the AFP is well prepared and well positioned to do Australia proud.”

Just the beginning

More than 500 members were deployed to Operation Arew at the height of the AFP’s involvement. The AFP still has 13 members deployed to the Netherlands.

For Anthony, he began his exit from Operation Arew on 30 July 2014 and made his way from Kharkiv to Kiev. His first task was to brief Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Sir Angus Houston who headed up the Australian response.

In The Hague on 2 August there were further briefings with Australian Ambassador to the Netherlands Neil Mules and to Dutch and Australian police and military personnel.

On 3 August 2014, Anthony made his way past the sea of flowers at Schiphol Airport and back to Dubai. Now two years on, Anthony is proud of his involvement but also highlights the professionalism of the AFP and its members who met the immense challenges of the MH17 investigation.

“We hope we don’t have to go into a situation like that ever again – deploy to the middle of a conflict zone. But it may happen again,” Anthony says. “If it does I am confident the AFP is well prepared and well positioned to do Australia proud.”

Hilda also reflects on the magnitude of the task and the AFP’s ability to meet the challenges of an extremely difficult operation.

“It was really amazing,” Hilda says. “From the way I see it no matter what role someone played in it – be it investigation or the command post or supporting us so our credit cards worked or we had sufficient money on us to purchase items, or doing up the rosters to have our welfare needs addressed. All those elements from the AFP were just amazing and everyone should feel really proud.”

A sea of flowers at Schiphol Airport commemorates those killed in the MH17 tragedy.

The long journey home: victims of the MH-17 tragedy arrive at Eindhoven Airfield in the Netherlands.

Photo by Corporal Jake Sims, Department of Defence.



Bringing them home

International partnerships and a shared goal transformed nations into a single team in bringing home the victims of MH17.

AFP Station Sergeant Rod Anderson stood on the old railway siding at 'The Plant' at 1pm as a train with four refrigerated carriages rolled in. "I wasn't aware of the exact location," he says. "But it was about a 30-minute drive from the Kharkiv Palace motel, within the precincts of the Kharkiv city."

He noticed the rope seals, believed to be put in place by pro-Russian separatists. By 4pm the seals were broken and the task of removing the remains of the MH17 victims began.

The Plant was once used to build tanks in the Soviet era. For the next five days it was used for the very different task of categorising and preparing the victims of MH17 for air transfer to the Netherlands – and then home.

It was nothing Rod had imagined he would find himself doing. "Certainly, it was nothing I have experienced before.

But this is where our processes and procedures kicked in. We knew what we had to do, we just had to adapt to the different conditions that were presented to us."

Rod's usual job is Station Sergeant at Gungahlin Police Station in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). He also holds the position of Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Commander for ACT Policing. So it wasn't a surprise that he was called to support the Australian response to the tragedy.

He was contacted on 18 July by the then AFP Manager Forensics, Dr Simon Walsh. On 19 July he departed Australia for The Hague. They were briefed on arrival in The Hague that a refrigeration train was to arrive in Kharkiv. So it was that Rod found himself on the old, disused rail siding as Forward DVI Commander for the Australian contribution to Operation Arew.



Family Investigation Liaison Officer Kylie Hemiak was tasked with assisting the families of the van den Hende family and Sister Philomene Tiernan, all of whom died in the MH17 tragedy.

Bringing them home

It was a difficult task but Rod had worked with many of the international law enforcement agencies that had volunteered to assist. Many he had trained over the previous 10 years.

“There were many different moving parts. What made it easy were the relationships we had already established with different countries. They also understood how the AFP worked and what we needed to achieve.”

For the next five days, the international contingent at The Plant would categorise and prepare the remains for transfer to the Netherlands. Rod says the positive outcome from that first week was that the vast majority of remains were recovered in that effort.

It was then that the international effort could focus on searching the crash site. AFP Commander Mark Harrison developed a search method using a geospatial search technique devised from the sport of geocaching (see Platypus 117, Jan-Jun 2015).

“We discussed the search strategy which would include obtaining geospatial information of human remains, personal property and sections of the plane,” Rod says. “We could sectorise where material was seen and plot those or give them geo-tags so that we could target our search effort rather than a one sweeping search.”

DVI teams used satellite images of the search zone with the location and GPS coordinates of the relevant items. The team then used the GPS units to locate items, which were assessed, recorded and recovered using standard DVI

forensic procedures followed. A radial search around the object was then conducted.

“It has been said before – if we tried to run an exercise with all the different scenarios and conditions that occurred during this incident, people would get up and leave. They simply would not believe it was realistic.”

Rising to the occasion

In the Netherlands, the responsibility of identifying each of the victims began. AFP forensic scientist Sarah Benson was called on to replace Dr Walsh as the Australian DVI Commander. The role had also broadened to support the criminal investigation.

Sarah wasn't a stranger to deploying offshore. She deployed to Bali in her role as an explosive chemist straight out of university in 1992. But this was different. There were personal and professional challenges Sarah was confronted with.

“The role was a leadership position in the DVI space and that was new to me and all the partners that I was going to be working with was new and that was a challenge,” Sarah says.

“There was also the complexity we faced in the MH17 investigation around the security environment in Ukraine and what that meant from a forensic point of view with respect to evidence recovery and the sub-processes from there. The fundamentals of forensics are preservation of evidence in establishing continuity of items in both processes of DVI and criminal investigation.”



The long journey home: victims of the MH17 tragedy arrive at Eindhoven Airfield in the Netherlands. Photo by Corporal Jake Sims, Department of Defence.

There were also personal challenges. From initial reports, they knew this was not like anything the AFP had seen or practised. As a mother, she says at times she had to walk away from the computer and images of the crash site.

Sarah says it did take her a while to settle into the role but it was a matter of rising to the occasion. It was at the first Identification Board Meeting that she realised she needed to step up.

“It was quite a wakeup call,” she says. “I said ‘right, step up and you can do this’. It was a difficult task because of the challenges performing at that level. And the emotion connected to some of the roles. But we were part of a team.

“Everyone was working toward the common goal, specifically in both those spaces of DVI and investigations, to identify the victims and ensure the loved ones’ wishes were met for repatriation.”

Ultimately, Sarah says it was a great personal experience to have been involved. She watched as the disparate nations, agencies, judicial systems and work cultures merged into a single team with a common goal.

The home team

The Family Investigative Liaison Officer (FILO) program was raised in response to the Bali bombings in 2002. Their role is to act as a conduit between the families impacted by a critical incident and the AFP investigation team, to provide a single point of contact for the family to ensure ongoing messaging with regards to the identification of their loved one/s and any ongoing investigation. Operation Arew again

highlighted the vital nature of the role in support of the whole-of-government response.

Within 24 hours of the Incident Coordination Centre (ICC) being established, 26 FILOs (from a deployment capability of 30) were deployed to 23 different family groups. Within the first week, a further four FILOs were deployed offshore to streamline the identification process.

Federal Agent Kylie Hemiak joined the AFP in 1994. Her gravitation toward victim-based crime also inspired her desire to take on the dual duties of a FILO. She was tasked as liaison officer for the van den Hende family from Eynesbury on the western edge of Melbourne. Father Hans, mother Sharliza and their three children Piers, 15, Marnix, 12 and Margaux, 8, all died on MH17.

Another level of complexity was that the van den Hende family were all born overseas. Hans was Dutch, Sharliza was Malaysian and the children were all born in Malaysia. They had made their home in Australia for seven years yet all their relatives were overseas.

“It was unusual, different and difficult,” says Kylie. “In the beginning it was quite confusing and confronting. We had no next of kin, which was unusual. We had a large family home that we needed to access for the purpose of obtaining Ante-Mortem material to assist the identification process. One half of the next of kin was in Malaysia and the other half was in the Netherlands.”

Kylie says the process of liaising with the families commences through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Crisis Response Centre. Initially there was a lot of documenting the many emails and follow-up phone calls



to make sure nothing was lost in the communications. Establishing a rapport with the families in the Netherlands and Malaysia, the DFAT Contact Officer, the Dutch Family Liaison Officers and Malaysian authorities was paramount given the three-way conversation in three different countries.

“I think from the beginning you just need to be very open and honest with them and not make any promises you can’t fulfill. The families quickly realised what they were dealing with and it’s important to inform them of the facts and what you do know. The main thing in those critical early stages is to keep them updated.”

Kylie says it was complex but both families were respectful accepting of the others’ wishes and religious faith. Hans had converted to the Muslim faith to marry Sharliza and the families jointly decided to have the family buried in their chosen Australia with Islamic rituals. The van den Hendes were buried near their home in Eynesbury.

Kylie also was allocated to liaise with the family of Sister Philomene Tiernan, the last Australian identified. Kylie was directly involved in Sister Tiernan’s repatriation and return

to her convent in Sydney. “I’d like to think she made us wait for a reason,” Kylie says and laughs with a considered sense of irony, explaining that it were as though Sister Phil (as she was fondly known) continued to look out for others before herself.

“To witness the comfort that other family members received from knowing that ‘Phil’ was on the flight or seated near their family member has been very comforting to people. I saw that happening at the NSW inquest. I was with the Head Sister of Phil’s order. You could just see the other families being drawn into her and her serenity.”

Comfort

The enormity of Operation Arew has left its mark indelibly in the memory of all who deployed both offshore and domestically to support the AFP response. The responsibility weighed heavy on the shoulders of all. That responsibility continues. There are still 10 AFP members deployed to the investigation, including four members in Ukraine, and there continues to be a dedicated team of investigators and forensics members in Australia, who



AFP members return from Ukraine to the Netherlands aboard a Royal Australian Air Force C-17.

continue to support the offshore investigation and ongoing family liaison.

But there is also comfort in that in the midst of a terrible tragedy that an international team did what they could to bring the victims home and provide their loved ones some closure.

Kylie Hemiak says there is still much to do. "If you look at Lockerbie, the court process wasn't resolved until 13 years later. It is a long-term relationship that you will have with families as a FILO."

For Sarah Benson it was a momentous personal and professional experience in her life to contribute to the global mission. "Obviously the successes that we achieved in the DVI process was a positive outcome for all countries."

Rod Anderson is now back at Gungahlin and reflects on the magnitude of the problem but proud of the results. "I think we achieved what we set out to achieve and continue to in terms of the investigation. 296 of the 298 victims have been identified. That is a tremendous effort by everyone involved."



Maintaining communications

The AFP's Critical Incident Communications Portal (CICP) website was operationally launched in August 2015 as another innovation borne of necessity to maintain communications with the families who lost loved ones in the MH17 tragedy.

Just over a year after the incident, the portal was seen as a way of ensuring ongoing communications with next-of-kin in an easily accessible and password protected web site.

The team leader of the Family Investigative Liaison Officer (FILO) Program Yvonne Crozier says the CICP was motivated by incidents like the 1988 Lockerbie aircraft bombing where communication with families extended for years as the incident progressed through the court and coronial processes.

Detective Sergeant Crozier says the CICP provides a way of families accessing important information in their own time and at a single source as the MH17 investigation progresses. It is also a way for FILOs to refresh their own knowledge.

"Different families have different ways of communication with AFP FILOs. Some families wanted to keep in touch, whilst others initially didn't want all the information," Detective Sergeant Crozier says.

"The portal was created as a basic model to provide a way of uploading information and updates – if the family didn't look at the information initially they could refer back to the website as a consistent source of information."

Next-of-kin are informed of updates through the FILO network as automated alerts were not considered a suitable method of randomly communicating with families.

Detective Sergeant Crozier says the web model is adaptable for new tasks and the technology is readily reproducible if another critical incident occurred.

"Should something happen tomorrow the communication portal can be their first point of contact for information that is being uploaded to the site."

Given today's interconnected world, should something happen tomorrow, the communication portal can be quickly accessed as a reliable, consistent source of information.

Pursuing the truth

The AFP and four partner nations continue to gather evidence on the MH17 tragedy.

“This is the most complex and difficult investigation I have ever been involved with in my police career.”

That says a lot coming from AFP Detective Superintendent Andrew Donoghoe, considering he’s been in the demanding world of federal law enforcement for more than 20 years.

His current assignment is leading the AFP and four other partner nations as part of the MH17 Joint Investigation Team (JIT). Detective Superintendent Donoghoe is keen that Australians are informed about the lengths the AFP and partners are going to in search for the truth in the Netherlands and Ukraine and the AFP’s contribution.

“It is important to remember the families and friends of 298 victims have all suffered a great loss. This is especially important for the AFP and it provides a tangible reminder of why members are deployed in the Netherlands and Ukraine, under sometimes challenging conditions,” Detective Superintendent Donoghoe says.

“It also shows the level of investment of JIT members and the massive undertaking for all parties involved.”

Under Netherlands’ leadership, the JIT comprises police and judicial authorities from the Netherlands, Belgium, Malaysia, Ukraine and the AFP to “gather the best possible evidence that can be upheld in any court, in any country”.

For now, the October 2015 Dutch Safety Board Report into MH17 answered what brought down the airliner. But it remains officially unstated who was responsible. This question drives Detective Superintendent Donoghoe and the Operation Arew team to consider, in detail, the deaths of 298 victims – 41 of whom were Australian or had close ties to Australia.

The AFP’s presence includes investigators, intelligence officers and forensic specialists with the international JIT, which aims to investigate and prosecute those responsible for downing the aircraft. Partner agencies overcome differences in law enforcement technique and standards, with varying legal and jurisdictional systems engaging to conduct the investigation.

“As police, we quickly appreciate each other’s skills and experience, and understand how and why we are doing this work – we share a common purpose and bond,” he says.

There is a high level of international engagement required by an investigation of this complexity, with numerous partners bringing differing legislative and judicial jurisdictions.

“There’s an incredible amount of research material and differing legal systems – but Australian and Dutch members are working in Kiev to build good relations with each other –and with the Ukraine – to effectively conduct the investigation.”

The AFP has a solid working relationship with all JIT partners, including the Security Services of Ukraine and are working alongside law enforcement agencies in those services.

An overwhelming amount of information has already been collected. This includes video files, photographs, interviews, witness statements, telephone intercepts, and lots of intelligence. A vast amount of forensic examination work has been completed.

“It’s a very big repository of evidentiary information that takes time to meticulously scour – and access to the AFP’s electronic resources for our members in the Ukraine can also be challenging. But we continue to look for the clues that are going to lead us to the right solution to the problem we have.”

The information held by the JIT already eclipses any of the AFP’s major counter terrorism or organised crime investigations. “At last count, there are over 350,000 categorised images, 124,000 reviewed and translated telephone intercepts, and 5.5 billion preserved internet links and pages,” he says.

Locally recruited interpreters translate all relevant conversations into English, the working language of the JIT. There is ongoing and daily consideration of the complexities of the work done, being undertaken and

The reconstruction is a pretty confronting sight, but it does remind us why we are here and focuses us on the task at hand.

anticipated for the future. Also looking ahead, the JIT is using innovative 'big data' technologies to harness, search, process and analyse the JIT's 'big data' holdings.

Operation Arew and The Hague Post members recently visited the Dutch Air Force base in July to view the partially reconstructed frame of MH17 as part of their investigations.

"The reconstruction is a pretty confronting sight, but it does remind us why we are here and focuses us on the task at hand.

"It motivates the team to get to the truth of what happened and to provide closure for those that have lost their loved ones.

He says the JIT approach is to investigate to the highest standard and adopt the processes and practices of the highest standard of the countries affected. "Everything we do and contribute – even from our common law standard – will be sufficient for the Dutch system and vica versa. In turn, everything that the Dutch, the Ukrainians, the

Malaysians and the Belgians are doing for the JIT could be admissible for Australia's purposes.

"We are making sure all information we collect is coming back to one central repository and is applied to the file, so that at the end of the day we can achieve an outcome in this matter."

It is a very complex investigation.

"It's the most complex matter I've had to run as an investigator in more than 20 years of policing – and is complex for a whole range of reasons. But a way of breaking down the complexity and make sure everyone works together is the formal agreement like the JIT.

"I am extremely proud to be leading a team of dedicated members who are doing an outstanding job, in often restrictive and difficult working environments, many kilometres away from their loved ones.

"We are all extremely motivated to do the best investigation possible. We won't stop until the perpetrators of this tragedy can be brought to justice."



Current AFP Operation Arew staff visit the MH17 reconstruction site in June this year.

Finding Kathleen

Canberra's Kathleen Bautista's survival was nothing short of a miracle – with a little help from some great police teamwork.

It was a remarkable story that first captivated the national capital, the nation and ultimately the world. Canberra's 19-year-old Kathleen Bautista was a gregarious and bright young woman who was having a rough point in her life. After a night on the town in Canberra with her friend; she left on her own, depressed and unhappy.

Kathleen was last seen driving her black Hyundai i30 at 7am on Saturday 5 September, 2015. Even more concerning, Kathleen texted "I'm sorry forever" to her family and boyfriend and that was the last they heard from her. Kathleen drove to a remote bushland area in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and drove her car off the road. The vehicle rolled several times and came to rest in a small creek bed at the bottom of a ravine.

It could have been a tragedy. Yet, this story happily blossoms into an astonishing account of survival and one that captured the heart of the national capital. Kathleen survived for six days without food. She was badly bruised with abdominal and leg injuries. Kathleen eventually tried to crawl to the road to find help – but disoriented, had crawled up the wrong side of the ravine and was further away from help than before.

How Kathleen survived is still a mystery, but how she was found came down to the tireless work of ACT Policing (the AFP's community policing service in Canberra). The police officers and their partners at the Emergency Services Agency were instrumental in Kathleen's story ending happily. When police and emergency services found her on Friday 11 September, 2015, medics said she was inside her last 24 hours.

"Honestly, I cannot describe it," says Detective Sergeant John Giles from Woden Crime. He was tasked as police forward commander for the search effort and was one of the first people to reach Kathleen. It was clear that Kathleen was in poor health and had not moved for some time.

"I approached her with a little caution," he says. "I thought 'she is probably not going to be with us'. As I

got near her, she said 'excuse me, can you help me, I'm stuck'.

"I stopped in my tracks," Detective Sergeant Giles says. Even now there is relief in his voice as he relates the story. "I just turned around and rang her dad. It was the first time Ronnie [Bautista] was not upbeat. He just said 'hello, John'. I said, 'Ronnie, we've got her'.

"He just screamed. He just screamed and he asked me to repeat myself about three times. I've got to tell you, it was an emotional moment – for all of us. It was a rough ride."

A rough ride

From the time Kathleen's family alerted police, it was a race to find their daughter. Detective Sergeant Giles says right from the go there was an understanding within the investigation. He says "if this was my child, what would I like the police to be doing". That was the impetus that drove the investigation.

The investigation brainstormed five plausible options from abduction to parking her car in a friend's garage. Detective Sergeant Giles says 19-year-old kids just don't disappear off the grid. The investigators' process of elimination distilled into a remarkably accurate assessment of the situation.

Kathleen was a careful driver and had no traffic infringements – so she was hardly likely to speed or crash the car at terminal velocity. The safety features in the vehicle were such that at modest speeds she would survive. Intelligence was also able to view footage from point-to-point traffic cameras, all but eliminating the possibility that Kathleen had travelled to Sydney or Melbourne. Detectives believed she had most likely crashed her vehicle somewhere in the ACT and was still alive.

Numerous teams were called upon to put the pieces together and to determine Kathleen's last movements and location. On Saturday 5 September, ACT Policing Operations attempted to locate Kathleen's mobile



Kathleen Bautista's disappearance in a remote area of the Australian Capital Territory sparked a massive six-day search.



Police and emergency services rescue Kathleen Bautista after six days of survival in a remote area of the Australian Capital Territory.

Social media stats

ACT Policing uploaded six Facebook posts from the start of the search to the final statement from Kathleen.

- Reach: 3 million
- Comments from the public: 4200
- Likes: 100,000

Facebook comment:

“To those outside of Canberra who say the place has no soul you are mistaken. To see the whole community get around this young lady and her family is truly warming. Kat, all the best with your recovery.”

“You are a huge inspiration to girls our age and such a fighter, from one stranger to another, I’m so happy you’re okay and you deserve all the good things that are to come.”

“Moved to tears of gratitude again ... we were all for you Kat through the long search! You have your future ahead of you, many blessings.”

“So glad you are smiling & safe. Well done to this brilliant town. Well done to you sweet young lady, for having the strength to get through the days until your rescue.”

phone through Vodafone. Although this avenue appeared inconclusive at the time, the information they were able to obtain would later become paramount in finding Kathleen.

ACT Policing’s Intelligence Team Leader Sergeant Ivan Naspe says his team was able to work closely with Vodafone to further understand the ‘ping’ between Kathleen’s mobile phone and Black Mountain Tower. This initially led the search and rescue team to the lower Molonglo Nature Reserve.

Search and Rescue First Constable Lachlan Ryan and Leading Senior Constable Mark Travers coordinated the search, which involved considerable resources and began on day three of the investigation, initially concentrating on bushland west of Telstra Tower.

Specialist Response Group (SRG) Air Support used the police helicopter to search the western edge of the ACT from Kings Highway to Batemans Bay while SRG Maritime searched Lake Burley Griffin with Side Sonar Technology and rafted the Murrumbidgee River from Cotter to Uriarra.

Other search teams from ACT Policing included Crime Reduction, Traffic Operations, Rural Patrol and General Duties. On Wednesday 5 September, ACT State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers joined the search which continued around the reserve.

Media

It was also on day three that Detective Sergeant Giles opened up the investigation to the media. He says the investigation needed more people mindful of the black Hyundai and was willing to take the chance of the inevitable ‘distraction calls’.

ACT Policing’s Senior Media Advisor David Packwood was in contact with the Bautista family over the course of the week, coaching them through the growing media interest and managing requests for interviews with the family.

“The Kathleen Bautista missing person search is something that I will never forget,” David says. “On a personal level it consumed me from day one when John Giles called me and said ‘we’ve got a missing person and you’ve got the green light to open up to the media in our search for information.’”

“We engaged media outlets early, providing access to the search and rescue effort, which allowed the public to see what police were doing to find Kathleen and how they

could help,” he said. David also credited AFP Policing social media channels for getting the community talking about Kathleen and looking for her black Hyundai i30, essentially increasing the eyes on the street. Media also were given access to police internal briefings, which David says is something that doesn’t normally happen.

Then the breakthrough all had been hoping for occurred. ACT Policing Intelligence further scrutinised telecommunications records. Detective Sergeant Giles highlights the tireless efforts of Mandy Rankin and Amanda Canham and says they were the backbone of the intelligence analysts. He says it was they who really engineered the breakthrough with the telecommunications company.

A second tower at Isaacs Ridge had registered Kathleen’s mobile phone on Saturday 5 September. They cross checked this information against the Black Mountain Tower ping and were able to further define the search to a number of strategic locations in the Cotter area.

First Constable Ryan and Leading Senior Constable Travers, using this intelligence, directed resources to a number of locations in the Cotter area including Settlement Road. SES member Lisa Mitchell soon found Kathleen’s crumpled car at the bottom of Cotter Gorge.

About 10am that morning, Constable Gareth Hipwell of ACT Policing’s Rural Patrol saw a hand waving in the scrub a few hundred metres from the car, which turned out to be Kathleen.

The contact team that first approached Kathleen included members from Search and Rescue, Criminal Investigations, Rural Patrol, SES, and ACT Parks and Conservation.

When they found her, Kathleen was in poor condition, lying in the foetal position with clear signs of exposure. She was unable to move and had clearly not moved for a long time. Still, she was in remarkably good spirits, even telling jokes.

On the day Kathleen was found, a press conference was held involving Kathleen’s father, Detective Sergeant Giles, Senior Constable Ryan, Sergeant Naspe and SES representatives.

“This is why we come to work every day,” said Detective Sergeant Giles, who told the media he was overjoyed that he could make the call to Ronnie Bautista.

He credited the success of the mission to the incredible teamwork between ACT Policing Intelligence, SRG, Media, Operations, Crime Reduction, Rural Patrol, Traffic Operations, Search and Rescue, ACT Ambulance, SES workers and Vodafone.

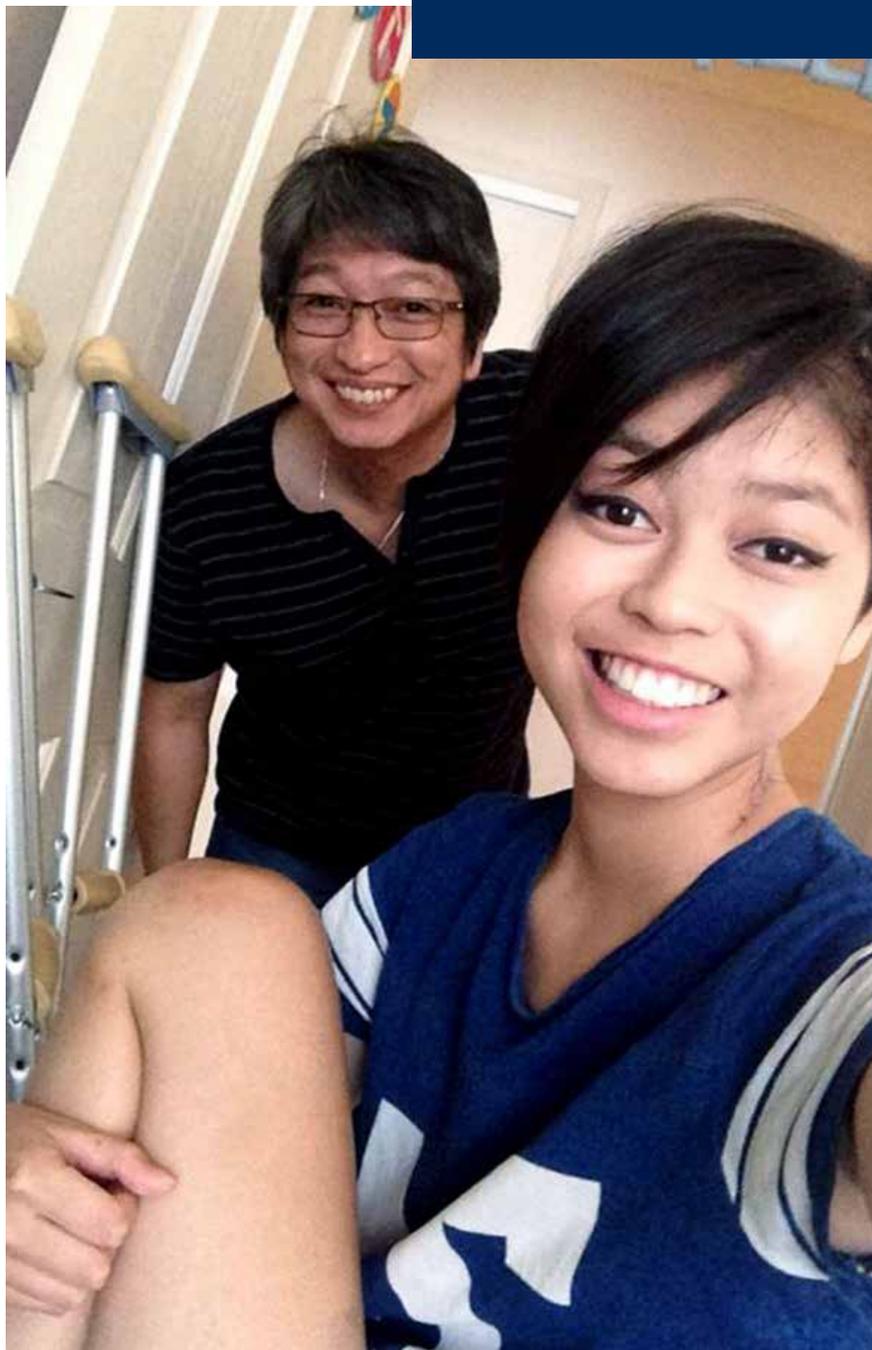
On Tuesday 22 September, Kathleen released a statement of thanks to the police and emergency services that helped find her. She continues to recover from her ordeal with the support from her family.

“It was certainly one of the best days of my policing career,” says Detective Sergeant John Giles.

The emotional intensity of the situation brought all involved closely together. So close was the bond between the Bautista family and police that Detective Sergeant Giles and David Packwood were invited to Kathleen’s 20th birthday party.

“Possibly the most tragic story has the most uplifting outcome,” Detective Sergeant Giles says. “Of course, this young girl has got a new lease on life. She is a beautiful, healthy 20-year-old now. She is an amazing kid.”

“Of course, this young girl has got a new lease on life. She is a beautiful, healthy 20-year-old now. She is an amazing kid.” Detective Sergeant John Giles



Kathleen Bautista takes a selfie with her father, Ronnie, safe and well in hospital.

Three cheers for quiet achievers

Property and exhibits registrars perform a vital role in supporting investigations and investigators.

For most who deal with the AFP's property and exhibits registrars, it's that front counter where seized evidence is checked in or checked out when needed. But behind the roller door, registrars manage the complex evidence of every investigation across Australia. It's a vital role – in fact a cornerstone in the trail of getting criminals to trial.

The AFP's 90 Registrars operate under state managers in each capital city and in Cairns. Fulltime Registrars are located in Canberra (the ACT Police Exhibit Management Centre and AFP National headquarters), Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. Dual position-responsibilities are located in Hobart, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin and Cairns.

Perhaps because it is such a well-oiled system, AFP members would largely be unaware of the warehouse environment and the full duties Registrars undertake behind the scenes. Registrars have an important role in ensuring the AFP meets its legislative requirements to maintain evidence. Importantly, this enables investigators to focus on investigations.

One of the most visible jobs of registrars at the moment is the management and destruction of the AFP's massive holdings of seized drugs and property. This is no small task. Warehousing facilities are operating at capacity in Melbourne and Sydney.

Project Kemble was established in 2015 to look at options for quicker disposal and ensure a national consistent approach is applied to property and exhibits. While registries have the authority to identify holdings for destruction, they are unable to destroy holdings until case officers provide the destruction notification request. Collaboration between state

managers and the registries under Project Kemble is yielding positive results.

Acting Coordinator Project Kemble Michael Field says this back-of-house function is an important part of the support provided to investigators and investigations. "People don't necessarily know what is happening behind the scenes," he says. "Registrars do more than just provide that customer service."

Along with the seized contraband, 'drug wraps' also are kept. This could be anything from a suitcase to the steam roller seized during Operation Pendine (Sydney Office) in 2012 with 350 kilograms of cocaine and methamphetamine. There are some holdings that date back to the late 1990s. All these items eventually need to be destroyed or, in some cases, auctioned as appropriate.

"We are running out of space very quickly," Michael says. "Over the last four years in Sydney, seizures have doubled and we are predicting that over the next four years they will double again. Sydney is seizing more and more and that is adding to the current holdings. Despite their best efforts, Sydney Registrars cannot destroy enough to keep up with the rate of seizures taking place."

A trial last year by Sydney registry is showing positive results for the future. A joint effort between the registry and Sydney Office worked to reduce the impediments to having the evidence destroyed. The disposal time for items included in that trial was reduced from the average eight months to four.

Other options to reduce the requirement to retain exhibits also are being explored. These include using



Seized drugs on the way to being incinerated.



Criminals tried to import 44 kilograms of liquid methamphetamine hidden in gel push-up bra inserts.

secondary evidence in trials, such as photos and video from when drug imports are being seized and deconstructed.

State Manager NSW lead an initiative under which drug wraps are destroyed 28 days after receiving the National Measurement Institute (NMI) certificates. This has been very successful and as a result, all other state managers have adopted the initiative.

“The secondary evidence can be used instead of holding on to the bulk 50 kilograms of cocaine, for example. There are also the samples and the NMI certificates that registries receive so there are options available.”

Project Kemble has sought support from the Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) for initiatives to reduce the requirement to retain exhibits. The CDPP are supportive of the AFP to using secondary evidence as appropriate. This is on a case by case basis, and investigators are encouraged to discuss destruction of property and exhibit items with CDPP members as part of their ongoing engagement throughout the case lifecycle.

Regions

Former sworn member and Brisbane registrar Paula Smith says it’s a busy job that includes many different aspects. Along with the primary aim to manage property and exhibits, registrars are called on to present on induction courses, training sworn members in processing items and maintaining the quality of AFP data systems in relation to evidence.

“It’s a support role for members,” Paula says. “We always make sure we avail ourselves and our time for the members concerned. It’s actually quite a diverse role in all the aspects of property within the AFP with all the guidelines and the aide memoirs we have to deal with and know.”

As a former sworn member and a team leader, Paula she says it allows her to more fully understand what investigators require. “I think that works in my favour and to the investigators as well,” Paula says. “It’s not just cut and dry. There are many different aspects involved with an investigation and property is just a small part of it really.”

But Paula welcomes Project Kemble. While Registrars can’t identify property and exhibits for destruction, new guidelines do allow them to identify outstanding items with investigators. Paula says one memorable item was a motorbike seized on the Gold Coast.

“We had to find ways to store that vehicle and even just processing those types of seizures can be problematic.



All items need to be sealed – but how do you seal a motorbike? But it is one of those things you just have to work around. And then assist the officers identify ways of destroying it.”

For part-time registrars, they not only juggle the diversity of their Registrar duties but the need to balance the requirements of other equally demanding roles. Adelaide registrar Michelle Quintrell also performs the duties of special projects Registrar and coordinates the AFP’s operational database for the South Australia region.

Routine tasks include monthly reports, stocktakes, preparing and managing drug and exhibit destructions and provide assistance to members and outside agencies with property and exhibit related issues.

With some understatement, Michelle says she initially felt overwhelmed coming into the job. But with support from other registrars and management, grew in confidence and now enjoys her dual role. I love the variety and working independently, as no one day is

ever the same. I find that professionally fulfilling,” Michelle says.

Michael Field says he is committed to greater recognition of the Registrar role. He says the multifaceted responsibilities of the registrar are underrated and his intent is to promote their skills and talents more formally. The first step is to establish a formal duty statement that recognises the diversity of the Registrar role.

“At the moment, Registrars come under a generic role description – there is no real description of what their role is and what their duties are. They just fall into a standard administration role. One of things we are doing is defining their role. So it is very clear and what their duties actually are and what they do for the AFP.”

Michael says this enormous effort undertaken by registrars allows investigators to concentrate on their role knowing that the item seized as part of their investigations will be managed appropriately to assist in achieving outcomes.

[Click here to watch a video of the Operation Pendine media conference.](#)



Creative criminals

You've got to hand it to criminals – well, at least some of them show a bit of creativity in their attempts to smuggle drugs across international borders. But a steamroller?

The AFP's property and exhibit registrars are responsible for the storage of property and exhibits seized during the course of an investigation on behalf of investigators.

Seized items come in many shapes and sizes – a bit like the recent investigation that uncovered 44 kilograms of liquid methamphetamine hidden in gel push-up bra inserts.

Some of the innovative 'nice-try-but-fail' attempts to smuggle drugs include suitcases, electronic items, furniture, car parts, and large volumes of smaller items – such as the bras inserts.

But one attempt that gets an A+ for effort is when 350 kilograms of cocaine and methamphetamine were discovered in a steamroller and other heavy machinery in November 2012.

Then again, a steam roller is as good as any other item if you are trying to make a profit from illicit drugs. Of course, it couldn't have been too clever – they got caught after all.

Two foreign nationals were arrested during Operation Pendine. A total of 235 kilograms of methamphetamine (estimated \$174 million street value) and 115 kilograms of cocaine (estimated \$63 million street value) were seized along with about \$150,000.

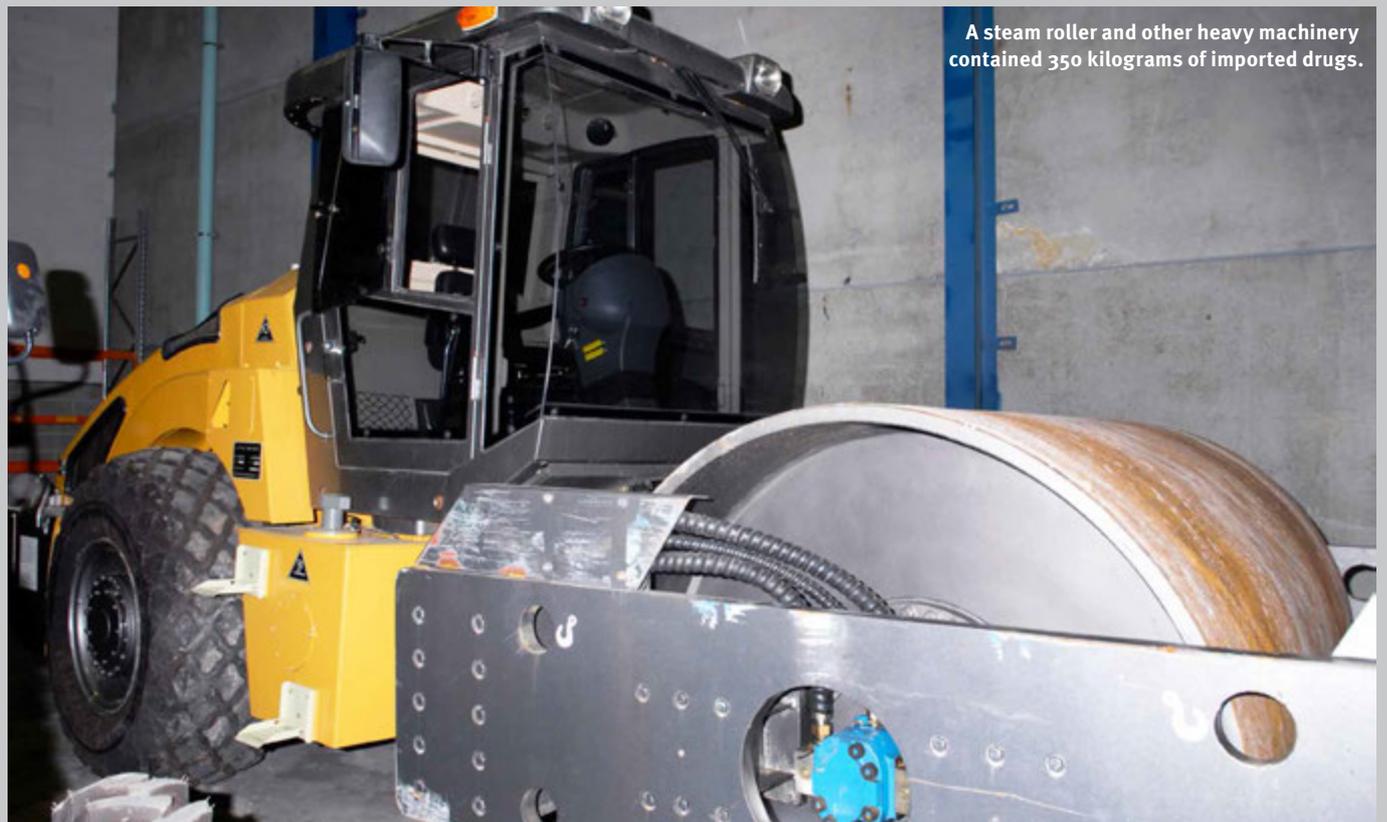
But what do you do with a steamroller when you're done with it as evidence? It turns out there are options.

The drugs end up in an incinerator, 'drug-wraps' can be broken down for incineration or metal objects can go into a recycler. But it's a bit hard to shove a whole steamroller into a crusher.

The steamroller, however, was auctioned off as a high value item. The money raised is provided to the AFP Treasury Team who then facilitate its transfer to the Australian Government.

As legislated by the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, the funds from confiscated assets are deposited into the Confiscated Assets Account, which is managed by the Australian Financial Security Authority on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The funds can be used to benefit the community through crime prevention, intervention or diversion programs or other law enforcement initiatives.



A steam roller and other heavy machinery contained 350 kilograms of imported drugs.

On top of the world

Federal Agent Fraser McKenzie was a long way from on top of the world when an earthquake struck the slopes of Mount Everest.

It was the moment AFP Federal Agent Fraser McKenzie had dreamed of for a long time. At 8848m the next stop is the Moon. For Fraser, standing on top of Mount Everest had become something more like an obsession. The big day was 21 May 2016. At more than 29,000 feet it's the sort of altitude only aircraft usually frequent. For the briefest of possible moments the Perth-based Airport policeman was flying high at the top of the world.

But 12 months earlier it looked more like a nightmare than a dream. On 25 April, 2015, Fraser's first attempt was stalled by a 7.8 earthquake at Everest Base Camp that killed 22 climbers. The year before, an ice fall and avalanche killed 16 Nepalese Sherpa on April 18, 2014, near Everest Base Camp.

Even as Fraser was realising his dream to summit Everest, fellow Australian climber Dr Maria Strydom

tragically succumbed to altitude sickness as she was descending from the peak in May this year.

When Fraser flew out of Perth for his first attempt to conquer Everest on 28 March, 2015, he would soon be just metres from the mighty mountain claiming his own life. By Anzac Day 2015, Fraser was at 17,500 feet at Everest Base Camp with the expedition and waiting for their turn to rotate through the high camps before the summit. His team was waiting to move out the next morning.

He woke before sunrise and "fired up" with a gunfire breakfast. "Alcohol is not a good acclimatisation tool at altitude," Fraser says but "it is a tradition I do not miss under any circumstances". The morning passed uneventfully with a gear shakeout in preparation for the departure up the notorious Khumbu icefall. It was here that 16 climbers, mostly Sherpa, were killed in 2014 during the earthquake.



At approximately 11.50am, Fraser moved up into the communal mess tent for lunch with other expedition members. The rest is his story.

The expedition was led by American guide and experienced mountaineer Greg Vernovage. Among Greg's achievements was his position as the Olympic female Volley Ball coach who led the US team to a Gold Medal at the Sydney 2000 games.

Highly capable and experienced, Greg has managed the logistics for several summit attempts in the past. He is well known in Nepal and well respected by Nepalese and climbers alike.

We were sharing a few laughs waiting for lunch and looking forward to the following morning's climb. We were now at the business end of the journey. If the weather remained okay, we all felt like we had a good shot at a summit.

Having said that, you can only assess your relative chance of success after leaving Camp 4 on the day you attempt to summit. I was acclimatising well and felt strong. On this day I was thinking well ahead of camps one and two.

But a lot can change in five minutes at the top of the world. It was about 11.55am when the ground beneath us began to move. Softly at first, then slowly increasing in intensity, the ground motion would best be described as elliptical.

Towards the end of the quake it was very violent and difficult to remain upright. However, there wasn't much panic. When the quake ended everyone rushed outside, all aware that a ground shake would be dangerous for climbers still travelling through the Khumbu Icefall and up at the camps.

A short time later, I looked up the icefall and heard a loud crack followed by a tremendous rumble. A massive ice shelf had released from our left and was thundering down the wall of the valley toward base camp.

The ice shelf released a tremendous amount of energy pushing snow, ice and rock through base camp killing many instantly and injuring a lot more. With nowhere else to go the residual snow and wind blast started heading down the valley through the remainder of the camp.

It had the look of a fast moving dust storm similar to the ones seen in documentaries of the Sahara. It was moving quick, appeared very dense, and was at least a hundred feet high.

Even if you had the energy and fitness to run there was nowhere to run to. I thought I was going to be buried so I tried to control my breathing. I also knew that if I was buried anyone capable enough of digging me out was more than likely going to be buried as well.



I got down behind a two foot rock wall built as a stand for an outdoor hot water urn. I was on my hands and knees and appropriately in the praying position. I pulled my Down Jacket hood over my head. I tried to make a cup out of my hands in order to clear an area in front of my face.

The snow hit with a blast and it was difficult to breathe, the space around me darkened instantly. It hit with a loud roar and slowly increased in both volume and speed. I was jostled and felt the snow around the side of my face and over my body; I couldn't hear or see anyone around me.

A short time later, I would estimate no more than 20 seconds, I felt the blast pass behind me. I looked to my left and saw our Sherpa Cook Jor Bahadur Rai lying on the ground covered in snow and praying. I ran to him and yelled at him several times to see if he was alright. It took him quite a while to stop shaking and respond.

Heads popped up around camp like snow caped prairie dogs. The only apparent damage from the snow blast was tents and equipment. Everyone appeared to have been dipped in snow and we all dusted each other off.

I moved to a "small rise" about 20m behind me where the expedition leader Greg was standing and surveying the valley. I uttered a few expletives. Greg grabbed the radio and began calling the high camps to get situation reports.

Five minutes later the radio began to chortle and we received news that no one was in the Khumbu Icefall during the avalanche and that the high camp climbers were all okay. There was a short pause and then Greg looked down at me.

"We better get ready for casualties," Greg said.

I said: "How many?"

"Lots," he replied.

He told us to use the expedition communications and charging tent to triage the most seriously injured. Former US Marine John Reiter cleared out the tent for the influx of injured climbers. We didn't have to wait long. Casualties came flooding in from other areas on the mountain.

They were separated by medical staff and allocated to one of three tents according to the nature and severity of their injuries. The most seriously injured were treated in our tent. A second tent dealt with patients that had serious fractures and a third with the walking wounded.

In our tent we had eight seriously injured patients. The snow and ice had picked up rock and shot the debris through the camp site. Some of the head injuries were horrific and the blood loss was tremendous.

We were joined by Dr Ellen Gallant, a cardiologist from Utah, and an Indian Army doctor Captain Ritesh Goal from Bangalore. Fortunately for us, Captain Goal was trained in mass casualty incidents treatment. The doctors worked well together. They were extremely calm and methodical and assessed the injured. We bandaged, cannulated, administered meds and monitored the vitals as instructed.

Then we lost our first casualty at 4.08pm on the same day, an unknown male Sherpa. John Reiter and I wrapped his body in a Tarpaulin marked it with the time and place of death and carried him outside.

Unknown to us, a pile of bodies was building up on the other side of a small hill near our triage tent while we were treating the injured. The final count was 19 dead. Casualties were being brought in on ladders, tables, chairs and anything else they could use as a stretcher. Sleeping bags were used to keep patients warm, pad the ground and soak up the pools of blood that appeared everywhere. Soaked bags were discarded outside the tent as we managed to stem the blood flow with bandages.

Sunset is at around 6pm however with high features on either side of the Khumbu Valley darkness at basecamp comes well before. The temperature drops dramatically and keeping the triage tent warm was extremely difficult. We received information from Kathmandu that they had been hit hard and all helicopters in Kathmandu were diverted to assist in the rescue effort in other parts of Nepal. However, if the helicopter was currently at the Village of Lukla or above it could remain in the Khumbu Valley and evacuate the injured from Base Camp.

Helicopter flights were stopped for the afternoon. Late in the afternoon, the cloud base drops in the Khumbu Valley. Without visual sight of the mountain the helicopter flights were grounded until the morning – assuming the weather was fine.

After the earthquake and avalanche at Base Camp the final casualty count was 19 dead and 60 injured. Our expedition was spared due to luck of geography. A small moraine to our left looking up the Khumbu Valley dissipated most of the force of the avalanche. For some individuals it was just sheer luck or bad luck. One climber further up base camp moved his tent behind a large boulder because of a noisy team member in a tent next door and was shielded from the worst of the avalanche. California-based Google Engineer Dan Fredlin was killed while talking with his tent mate when a boulder rolled over the tent. His tent mate was spared.

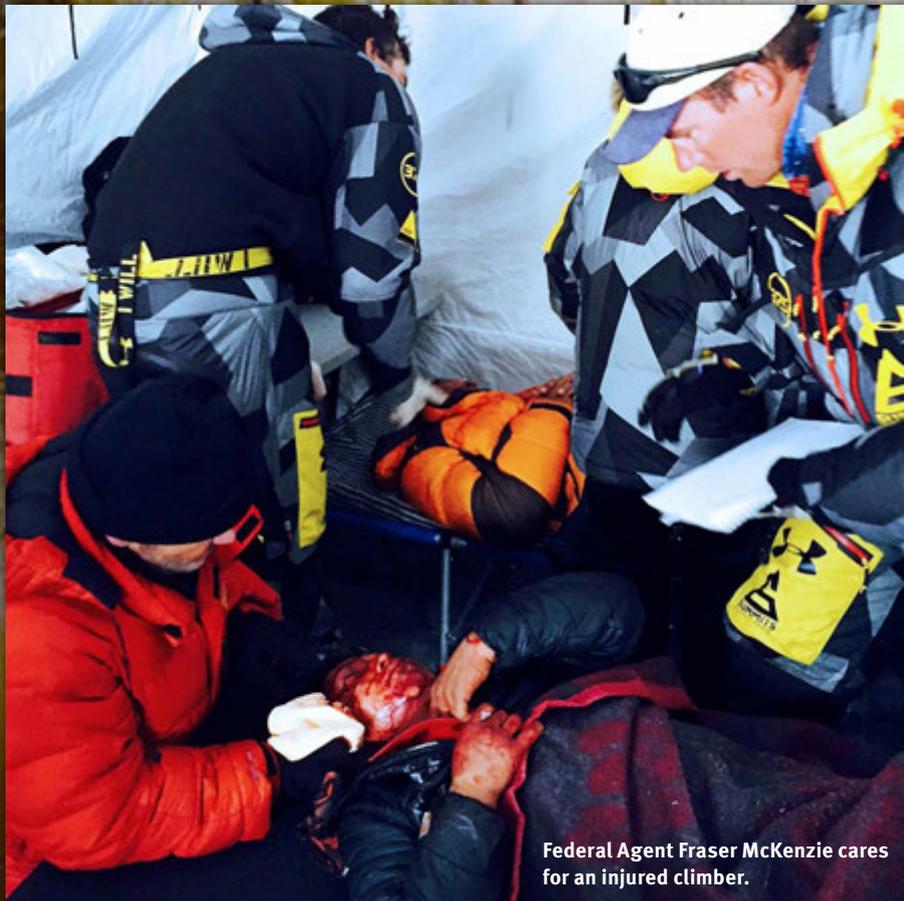
The most poignant sight I witnessed was the sight of six Sherpa carrying a dead colleague to the evacuation helicopter. The deceased was neatly wrapped in a plastic sheet. Rope secured his entire body. At regular intervals



An injured climber waits patiently for attention.



Everest guide Luke Reilly, left, and Federal Agent Fraser McKenzie survey Everest Base Camp and the Khumbu Valley.



Federal Agent Fraser McKenzie cares for an injured climber.



The mess and cooking tents snow dusted after the avalanche.



Federal Agent Fraser McKenzie and Doctor Ellen Gallant share a happier moment after the final evacuation from Mount Everest.



Climbers are highlighted against the immense Khumbu icefall showing the scale of Mt Everest.

down the body along both sides were tied small hand sized rope handles. I was struck by the neatness of the deceased's presentation to the helicopter then it dawned on me sadly, plenty of practice.

By 11.30 am the next day after the avalanche the last casualty and deceased was flown out of base camp. A remarkable treatment and evacuation time of 23 and one half hours for an emergency at that altitude. It must be said that key to the planning and execution of the evacuation were the abilities of Expedition Leader Greg Vernovage.

Greg was unflappable and dispensed tasks with clear and concise direction. I never once saw him display any kind of stress. Also of note was the performance of the two doctors in our tent, Ellen Gallant and Captain Goal of the Indian Army. We could only do so much but you need a specialist to stop the cause of the flow and they were the precise specialist we needed for that kind of incident.

That night I finished the rest of the bottle of Anzac Day rum, I don't remember the rest.



Race Across America

The AFP's Natasha Horne took on a whirlwind, record-breaking ride across the USA.

Six days, 13 hours and 27 minutes.

That's the time it took for Natasha Horne and her three teammates to cycle across the United States, a total of 4828km.

It wasn't a fast paced scenic holiday for the Sydney-based AFP member – the women were competitors in what is known as the world's toughest cycling race.

Since 1983, competitors across the world have travelled to Oceanside, California, to compete in Race Across America (RAAM).

Riders are faced with the terrain of 12 different states, from the Rocky Mountains in the west to cornfield country in Kansas to the Appalachian Mountains in the east.

The distance is 1500km longer than the Tour de France and there are no rest days. The elevation climb of 51.8km is the equivalent of climbing Mount Everest six times. The race is a true test of endurance, speed and determination.

Competitors have one goal – get to Annapolis, Maryland, as quickly as possible without stopping and set themselves the challenge of completing the race in less than eight days.

When Natasha and her team, the Veloroos, departed Oceanside on 20 June 2015 they were the first Australian



The Veloroos warm up in Oceanside, California, before the start of the big race.

all-women team to compete. They were also part of a small number of women entrants. Over the last 35 years, only 15 per cent of RAAM competitors have been women.

The record is calculated by average speed. The Veloroos broke the team record of 29.8km/h for a four-woman under-50 team held since 1994, with their average speed of 30.7km/h.

Natasha tackled over 1200 kilometres on her own, the equivalent of cycling from Canberra to Adelaide.

As triathletes, The Veloroos had a high level of fitness prior to RAAM, which enabled them to focus on cycling and simulate different conditions early on in their training.

Before work, Natasha would ride for an hour to an hour-and-a-half, and would also go for a ride after work.

“On the weekends we would build up distances to sometimes riding for 14 hours, and on the Sunday we would do something shorter, probably eight hours,” Natasha explains.

“We also did altitude and heat training. We would simulate 20 minutes on-20 minutes off in 35 degree heat at about 3370m above sea level.”

There were also some ‘short’ diversions during training. The Veloroos visited AFP Sydney Office to complete a 24-hour cyclethon and breakfast to raise funds. AFP members

cheered on the Veloroos around the clock. The event raised about \$3000 toward the US campaign.

The days merged into one when the race began, with the team working in six-hour shifts. Natasha was paired with Julie-Anne Hazlet. Sarah Matthews and Nicole Stanners were The Veloroos’ other pair.

“Julie-Anne and I would always leverage off each other and what we were feeling. By the end we wouldn’t even talk. You’d become so in tune with the other person,” says Natasha.

Each six-hour shift was divided into 20-minute intervals, with one rider taking on 20 minutes while the other followed with three of the crew in one of the support vehicles.

During the six-hour ‘rest’ shift Natasha and Julie-Anne would have to shower, change, be checked by the crew physiotherapist and doctor as well as try to sleep before the next rider interchange.

Lack of sleep was the hardest challenge, with Natasha guessing she only got a total of eight-and-a-half hours during the race.

“Sleep delirium and sleep deprivation were probably the hardest thing of the race for all of us. It’s not something that you can train for. You can’t simulate it,” she says.



Natasha hits the road in Death Valley on the 4828 kilometre Race Across America.

When Natasha arrived in Gettysburg Pennsylvania (home of the Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War in 1863) sleep deprivation was taking effect.

“I remember being on the bike and looking around and seeing all these cannons. I turned to the guys in the car and said are you sure we’re going the right way because right now I feel like we’re in a theme park and there are soldiers and cannons pointing at me,” she recalls.

She admits she “was also probably hallucinating a bit,” understating the extent of sleep deprivation.

During night rides when exhaustion and sleep deprivation were at their worst, Natasha’s diet played an important role. Fuelled by a breakfast of oats and a protein shake, the food prepared by the crew’s chef was too heavy for Natasha. Instead, she survived on McDonald’s fruit shakes and Asian chicken salads with orange and edamame.

“Every time we went past a McDonald’s I made them stop and get me one of those,” she says.

In between salads she would snack on corn chips, which she said were one of her saving graces.

Starbucks became vital to staying awake in the second half of the race. The Doubleshot Protein Coffee, a canned coffee with added protein, was Natasha’s drink of choice.

When The Veloroos and the crew reached the finish line at 4am on Saturday 27 June they were exhausted.

If they were expecting a fanfare waiting for them they were in for a shock.

“The finish line is at a Shell petrol station about 5km out of Annapolis, it’s just a line on the road. They tell you your finish time and then they escort you down into the city,” Natasha says.

“So you’re sitting at this petrol station at four o’clock in the morning, everyone’s dead tired and we’re looking at each other thinking this is a bit anticlimactic.”

RAAM staff escorted The Veloroos and their crew to the finish banner in Annapolis. Family and friends were there to greet them and they were awarded first place for their record-breaking effort.

The race also provides competitors with an opportunity to raise money for charity.

The Veloroos chose to support The Amy Gillett Foundation, which seeks to create safe cycling conditions in Australia and reduce injuries and fatalities and Tour de Cure, an organisation that raises awareness and money to find a cure for cancer.

A total of \$50,000 was raised before and during the race, which was evenly split between the two charities. One



AFP member Natasha Horne hits the road for a training run in San Diego.

pre-race event included a 24-hour cycling event at the AFP Sydney office.

“We sat on indoor trainers for 24 hours and people could either sponsor us or pay an entry fee and join us,” Natasha said.

“It was good because the Manager of Sydney Office joined us.”

There are 55 time stations during RAAM that need to be ‘checked off’ by the competitors. The Veloroos created ‘Adopt a Time Station’ and used social media to gain sponsors along the way. The distance between the last and upcoming time station became the dollar amount donated.

“When we got to the time station we did a shout out to the people that had adopted the time station,” explains Natasha.

“We were told to get off social media at one stage because we weren’t sleeping.”

Since completing RAAM, The Veloroos speak to primary school students about cycling and to corporate companies about work-life balance and team building.

“It’s one of those things that you don’t just finish, it keeps going,” Natasha says.

Although they broke the long-held record for the all-women under 50 division, Natasha is quick to say ‘yes’ to taking on the race again.

“In a heartbeat – there were so many things that we could have done better,” she says.



Sergeant Ian Whyte (centre) at his ACT Police Graduation Parade in November 1974.

Perspective

By Sergeant Ian Whyte, Team Leader,
Pre-deployment Training, International Operations.

The important things never change

I joined the ACT Police as a 19-year-old recruit on 3 June 1974. That was a while ago. How long ago? Well, long enough ago that petrol was around 13 cents a litre, my annual salary was about \$5200 and you could buy a house in most inner Canberra suburbs for under \$20,000.

So much has changed in that time. There were no computers back in those days with all paperwork completed on typewriters. Public telephones dotted the suburbs and local community centers and have now almost disappeared.

The ACT Police at that time was small, effective enough and tightly knit with policing methodology, standards and attitudes typical of the times. The two police stations in the ACT at the time were City Station, known as No. 1 Division, which served as HQ and consisted of the Watch house, Traffic, GDs, Communications, Criminal Records and a host of other smaller sections. No. 2 Division was located out at Woden Station in Phillip, which comprised GDs, Crime and Recruit Training.

There were no formal professional standards maintaining the integrity over watch we abide by today. All that business was the job of the station sergeants, who pretty much ran everything and everybody. The fleet of patrol cars consisted mostly of standard XA Falcons with an entertainment system consisting of a dodgy little transistor radio wedged between the dash and windscreen, generally tuned into 2CA.

Traffic Branch motorcyclists were riding Honda CB750s and at one stage in 1975/6, we were all driving around in Leyland P76 sedans! My accoutrements consisted of a .38 S&W revolver in a flap holster, rubber 'Billy club' baton (optional, as no-one seriously carried them but they made a great fishing accessory ... so I was told) and a set of handcuffs. That's all that was required then and perhaps, on reflection, indicative of a simpler Australian society long past and in stark contrast to the modern era and its demands on our members now.

I don't recall much formal 'mentoring' went on when you first joined a team fresh out of training. You were generally put with a senior constable who treated you like his own

A diverse career led
Sergeant Ian Whyte into
the Rescue Squad.



A great prank often played on the 'new comers' was to remove one or two sheets of carbon paper from a half completed COR when the member left the typewriter and went to the toilet for example. Some recipients saw the hilarity; however, the majority didn't.

In 1979 we farewelled the ACT Police and I swapped one badge number for another. The AFP was formed and everyone had to work through the difficult early years following the amalgamation. Things finally settled down and the AFP gradually matured, established its own identity and with the vision and drive of good commissioners, supportive governments and all the members, went on to achieve great things. The rest is history.

During the late 70s and 80s, I worked in Traffic as a motorcyclist, had a few years in Accident Squad, affectionately known as 'Prang Gang', followed then by some years full time with the Rescue Squad.

That role coupled with bush search and rescue, evidence searches and cliff rescue kept the squad very busy. We had the best gear and were a tight knit, loyal bunch. Some notable events that I was involved in during those years included the opening of Parliament House (the new one ... thankyou!), Operation Peat and the Thredbo landslide disaster. I still maintain that my days with Traffic Branch and later in Rescue Squad were some of my best.

My first taste of working off shore came in June 1999 with my deployment into East Timor with the UNAMET mission during the lead up to the vote for Timorese independence from Indonesia. I ended up down south in a town called Forohem in the Covalima District.

Together with my two civilian electoral officers, we travelled about delivering information and pamphlets to all the surrounding villages in the area. We weren't that bothered with the militias and they tended to leave us alone for the most part. That is, until we all tried to leave Suai a few days later following the vote.

Sergeant Ian Whyte says the "commitment and dedication" of AFP members has not changed in 42 years.

personal admin slave, told to "keep your mouth shut and do as you're told". Despite the apparent harshness of that introduction, it was good advice that enabled you to survive those first few months on the road. The muster rooms resembled typing pools with multi-coloured bottles of typing correction fluid all over the place. These were used primarily to correct the typos on the six-page Criminal Offence Reports (CORs) when writing off jobs.

They bailed up our convoy on the way out of town, took all our vehicles with most of our luggage and we had to then leave by helicopter. I recall landing in Dili and being driven to the UN Compound in a HiAce by an UNPOL officer wearing a bullet proof vest and blue helmet.

It became apparent to me very quickly that the situation in Dili had deteriorated to a significantly dangerous level than when I left there three months previous to travel to Suai. It would be another 11 stressful days stuck inside the UN Compound before I flew out to Darwin by RAAF C-130 Hercules. In 2001, the AFP members who participated with UNAMET were all recognised with the awarding of a Group Bravery Citation for their role in East Timor.

A few years later I had the opportunity to live and work on Christmas Island. It was a great experience for my young family and me. The Casino had just opened and there was a flight from Jakarta five days a week with hotel guests and gamblers. The AFP had responsibility for performing the regulatory functions of Immigration and Customs, which required a minimum of five officers at the Airport each flight. Consequently, Christmas Island policing had a strength of eight sworn officers, including up to six locally engaged 'Special Members'. The refugee boats from China had started arriving as well so all in all, it was a busy time there for such a small place.

On my return to the ACT three years later and after stints back at Woden and Tuggeranong patrols, another opportunity arose to work off shore. This time it was to the Solomon Islands as part of the newly created International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT).

A small group of us were sent to monitor the cease fire, receive and record surrendered weapons and generally provide a visible sign of change following the cessation of conflict. IPMT identified the Guadalcanal Beach Resort (GBR) as a base and so we all got in and started cleaning the place up and it gradually developed from then on. The current dining room was once the operations room and I vividly recall the swimming pool was full of dead toads floating in ranky brown water.

After that short three-month deployment it was back to ACT Policing and a few years later, another posting to Christmas Island followed by two UN deployments to Sudan and Timor Leste. Next was the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands and finally Cocos (Keeling) Islands. I encourage everyone, especially those with a young family, to have a go at getting posted to the External Territories. The work is interestingly varied and so suited, I found, to family life.

Despite all the tragedies, the conflicts, the drunks, villains, the roadside lawyers, all the 'nufties' and 'warbs', near misses, wins and losses, the work and role remains as relevant to me now as it always has been. It has provided me with the stability to adapt and cope with all the changes these past years.

The AFP has given me and my colleagues amazing opportunities. If you persevere and stick around long enough, it will do the same for you. As I reflect back across 42 years of policing and the AFP's amazing international reputation – the thing I find that has never really changed is the commitment and dedication of the AFP's people.

Finally, I owe so much to my beautiful, strong and supportive wife of 36 years and to my kids, all of whom make me proud every day.



Riding high: Sergeant Ian Whyte was a Traffic Branch motorcyclist in 1975-76.

When tragedy calls

ACT Policing members go the extra mile in the midst of human tragedy.



Senior Constable Dan Williams, left, and Constable Richard York have been recognised for their humanity.

AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin has said that most of the best work of police will rarely be seen. It is part of the job that police officers will be asked to confront often tragic human situations in their service to the community.

More often than not this service will take place behind the scenes, far from the public view. In one such case in Canberra last year, police officers couldn't help but go the extra mile when two young children were confronted with their own family tragedy.

On 8 December 2015, the AFP's community policing service in the Australian Capital Territory attended a suspected drug overdose death in the Canberra suburb of Florey. Senior Constable Dan Williams, Constable Richard York and Sergeant David Wills from ACT Policing responded from Belconnen Police Station.

A deceased male had been found non-responsive in bed by his 13-year-old son, Brad*. The initial information said Brad had noticed his father was very stiff, there was a lot of "white stuff" on the pillow where his dad's head had been and there was a syringe in one of his dad's hands. The deceased had a history of drug addiction including use of heroin and, more recently, Ice.

Brad closed the bedroom door and made sure his 10-year-old sister got ready and left for school. When she had left, Brad contacted Triple 0 and asked for police assistance.

ACT Policing responded from Woden and Belconnen stations. Among the responders were Constable York and Senior Constable Williams. Given the circumstances, police spent a significant amount of time looking after Brad and provided him timely support. Constable York noted the situation was particularly sad as the Christmas period loomed.

"It was a very brave effort from the little fellow," Constable York says. "I think the fact his son was able to do what he did and get his younger sister and her friend off to school without even kind of thinking about it. He wasn't looking after himself; he was looking after his baby sister."

Constable Dan Marshall and Constable Christopher Pham (Belconnen Patrol) also attended during the incident, along with Detective Acting Sergeant Dan Shaw, First Constable

Jeff Smith, Constable Jamie Whyte and Senior Constable Ben Russell (Criminal Investigations – Woden Crime).

At this point it became apparent the deceased had pawned Brad's Sony PlayStation prior to his death. Constable York took the initiative to purchase the PlayStation back from Cash Converters. He collected \$70 from the members present and set off for Cash Converters with Senior Constable Williams. Cash Converters returned the PlayStation without charge and the money collected was used to purchase Brad a soccer game to use with the PlayStation.

Unfortunately, the situation is all too familiar to police officers. "We attend a lot of deaths and a lot of different circumstances," says Senior Constable Williams. "We don't like doing it, we just do it – a deceased person, a drug overdose – in our role it is not too uncommon. We have got to get in and do what we need to do, with as low an impact on the affected family members as we can."

But the officers decided they could make a small difference. Senior Constable Williams says losing his PlayStation was just another bad outcome.

"It's like 'what can we do here?' Surely, we can do something because the PlayStation was never going to be brought back. If we don't do something about it, if we don't try and do something then he's not going to get that back, because no-one is ever going to go back and pay that."

The actions throughout the incident by Constable York and Senior Constable Williams were recognised in a formal Recognition of Members along with the other attending officers that helped without hesitation, noting their "impressive care, compassion and concern".

"All members' actions go 'above and beyond' and embody not only the true spirit of community policing, but also of the Christmas season. They should all be congratulated for their actions and acknowledged for their selfless acts," the document states.

Finally, it states that Brad may require acknowledgement for his own mature handling of the incident, despite the shocking circumstances.

*name changed for privacy

Day for Daniel



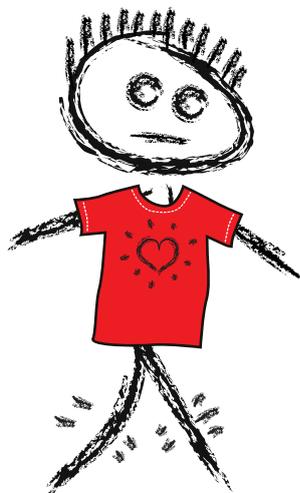
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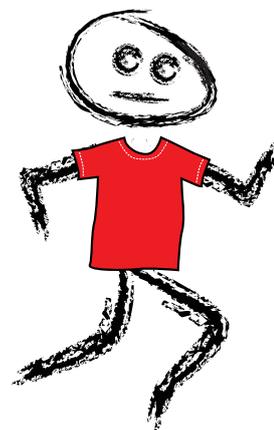
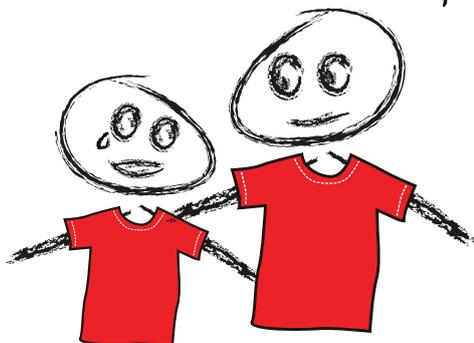
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Listen to your BODY CLUES



REACT

Run to a safe place



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