

Fraud and General Crime Branch

A multi-disciplined approach

timely development of intelligence and a co-ordinated approach to the task, where appropriate working closely with other agencies involved in combating the drug problem. The scope of drug investigations undertaken within the Region requires the flexibility and mobility to respond to matters occurring anywhere across the Region, optimising the limited resources available."

The Region has seen increasing trends in the availability of cannabis (New Guinea Gold) being imported from Papua New Guinea.

A number of successful operations have been conducted in Northern Australia resulting in a number of seizures and the arrest of several people. Of interest has been the varying methods of importation, ranging from transport by open dinghy across the Torres Strait to the more sophisticated means of concealment in motor engines and heavy earth moving equipment.

Intelligence indicates there is a growing concern that drugs are being exchanged for guns in the Region and this is being accorded a high priority.

Subsequent to intelligence indicating an increased availability of cocaine in south east Queensland, a major operation was mounted by the Gold Coast Branch into the activities of two Colombian nationals. They were subsequently identified as bringing substantial quantities of high grade cocaine into Australia through the post from South America. As a result of the six month investigation the two Colombian nationals were arrested and sentenced to 12 and eight years imprisonment.

The support provided to the drug operations areas by the Police Technical Unit and the Physical Evidence Unit has been invaluable in achieving the high level of success. These Units provide excellent operational support in drug investigations across the Region.

THE Fraud and General Crime Branch is located in Brisbane, with Sections located in the Northern Territory, North Queensland and Gold Coast Branches. The Branch emphasis is on the recovery of proceeds of crime.

Fraud throughout the Region continues to increase with a growing number of significant matters reported by the Australian Taxation Office, Austrade, Australian Reports and Transaction Centre, and Department of Defence, requiring that members engaged in such investigations have the appropriate level of training and core competency skills. Many of these investigations are complex in nature and often take protracted periods of time to complete.

The Region has experienced a diversity of other general crime committed against the Commonwealth, including corruption of public officials, espionage, conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, large scale thefts from military installations, bankruptcy and counterfeit currency.

Superintendent Ray Cooper, Officer in Charge of the Fraud & General Crime Branch said, "The level and sophistication of fraud and economic crime has created a greater awareness of its impact on the community. The number of major cases now referred to the Region requires that our resources be deployed to those matters of major priority, at the same time maintaining a capacity to provide an effective service to many other areas of AFP policing in the Region, including the sensitive area of Family Law."

He also recognised the scope for utilising the multi-discipline approach to major investigations, with the AFP as the lead agency, but utilising the resources of other agencies as appropriate.

"To maximise our efforts, regular meetings are held with mainstream

Commonwealth agencies to discuss anticipated referrals or projected workloads in order to facilitate forward planning to effectively manage the workload. This also requires effective and co-operative work arrangements with State police and other related enforcement agencies. The focus on economic crime, and efforts to seize proceeds of crime, requires very close working arrangements with the DPP and the Regional Criminal Assets Investigation Section."

A selected review of some of the fraud and general crime investigations reflects the diversity of matters dealt with through the Region.

In August 1991, a German national was arrested and charged in Brisbane with structuring offences committed contrary to the Cash Transactions Reports Act. It is alleged the money involved, in excess of \$250,000, was being transferred to Germany. This is believed to be Queensland's first prosecution of this type. He was convicted and fined.

In September 1991, the Queensland Police Service intercepted \$200,000 worth of counterfeit Australian currency. A number of people were arrested and the AFP has continued to assist in enquires.

Also in September of 1991, two people were arrested and charged with \$125,000 Social Security offences at Caboolture. They are currently awaiting trial.

In December 1991, five search warrants were executed in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast into an alleged \$500,000 committed on the ATO fraud by a bankrupt. Enquires are continuing.

In April 1992 a Rockhampton woman was arrested and charged with Taxation offences and for falsifying books of account contrary to the Crimes Act. The amount involved is in excess of \$100,000.