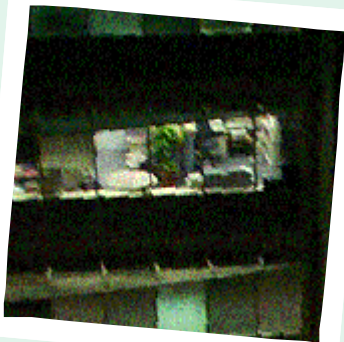
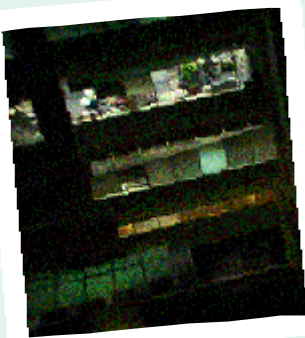


Budget funding will allow Program Axiom to develop into a world-class standard

By Federal Agent Graham Ashton, General Manager Southern Operations



July 1 was an important date in the development of the AFP's undercover policing program, Program Axiom, when it moved into the next phase of development after receiving tied funding of \$21.4 million, over the next four years, in the May 2002-03 Federal Budget.



Having completed its development phase, this allocation will allow the program to develop into a world-class undercover tool for investigators.

The program coordinator, Federal Agent Peter Darlaston believes that Axiom will now be able to offer a more complete range of undercover services to AFP investigators. "Through the early stages of Axiom we have, by necessity,

kept a low profile due to difficulties in meeting demand. The planning done for what we considered was a re-launch on July 1, will mean that we will be more active in marketing the program to investigators as a results-driven team with a service delivery ethos."

Two years of training programs has meant that the AFP now has a greater pool of undercover operatives and controllers who have received world-class training in the latest undercover techniques.

From July 1, Program Axiom will have full-time controllers in most regional centres who will fully integrate into the regional office. They will attend operations committee meetings and liaise closely with operational members. This means they will be well placed to provide timely advice to those investigators considering using undercover methodology in their investigations. The presence of a full-time controller will also mean they will



be on hand to conduct formal Axiom assessments in their local areas.

"What many members may not realise is that Program Axiom controllers have been trained to use lateral thinking in scenario development," Federal Agent Darlaston said.

"They will also be a useful resource for members to simply bounce ideas off when planning their investigations.

"An early challenge Program Axiom has had to address is that area offices have had to fund Axiom involvement on a user-pays basis. With full funding available from July 1, this will no longer be necessary which will, I think, make the program more attractive to operational areas."

Early development

Program Axiom began as a global research project into undercover policing known as Project Heptad. This project readily identified that undercover policing had been professionalised in many overseas agencies since its early days and was now delivering key results for policing agencies such as RCMP, FBI, Royal Dutch Police, and Britain's NCS and UKCS. These and numerous other agencies had formed an international working group (IWG) on undercover policing, which meets six monthly to set best practice standards, exchange ideas and methodologies, and set protocols for operatives exchanges and backstopping synergies.

Project Heptad recommended that the AFP commence development of an undercover policing program to give full effect to what has now become the Controlled Operations Act and the Assumed Identities Act. Heptad made more than 80 recommendations on the structure of what subsequently became Program Axiom. These recommendations took what were regarded as the best aspects of all major existing programs studied and incorporated them into one program.

Psychological support

At the most recent Australasian IWG meeting, hosted by the AFP, the Program Axiom psychological support program was endorsed as the Australasian best practice for other agencies to reach. This is quite an achievement considering Axiom is the youngest of the mainstream Australian undercover programs.

"The first principal concern with Program Axiom is operative safety and this will always be the case," Federal Agent Darlaston said.

"This is why the AFP has made such a commitment to the development of the psychological aspects of the program."

Backstopping

The creation of assumed identities and the legend building associated with undercover policing has been underway for some time and the AFP is already a key member of the International Backstopping Secretariat (IBS) which is a subgroup of the IWG.

The backstopping work of Program Axiom is now ably supported by the recent introduction of the Commonwealth Assumed Identities Act. In addition to his duties as the team leader Program Axiom backstopping team, Federal Agent Ron Thorn also serves as the National Registrar for Assumed Identities.

"Our computer records keep detailed account of all assumed identities created and used within the AFP, which are required for reporting purposes under the Act," Federal Agent Thorn said.

"It is important that any member requiring an assumed identity contact their local Assumed Identity Registrar to facilitate their request."

The future

Program Axiom is a key part of the road forward for the AFP. As the organisation increases its role in dismantling organised crime and tackling significant transnational crime issues, it requires that the very latest in policing methodologies be made available to it. The program is a very important tool in the fight against high-level crime and places the AFP in an enviable position at the forefront of covert policing.

For AFP members, Program Axiom guidelines are available on the IntraWeb and enquiries should be directed to Federal Agents Peter Darlaston or Peter Breen.

