

Australian Protective Service integrated into the AFP

By Catherine Crane

With the passage of the *Australian Protective Service Amendment Bill 2002* the Australian Protective Service became an operating division of the AFP on July 1, 2002.

To mark this event, staff from the APS, AFP and the Attorney-General's Department gathered at the AFP College in Barton for a simple but symbolic ceremony to mark the transition of the APS from the Attorney-General's Department with a symbolic gifting of the APS flag to AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty.

At the ceremony, acting Secretary Attorney-General's Department Ian Govey said that in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the US, the Government had decided it was important to consolidate and enhance Australia's national security initiatives.

"In the changing environment, particularly since September 11, the APS move to become an operating

division of the Australian Federal Police is a logical one."

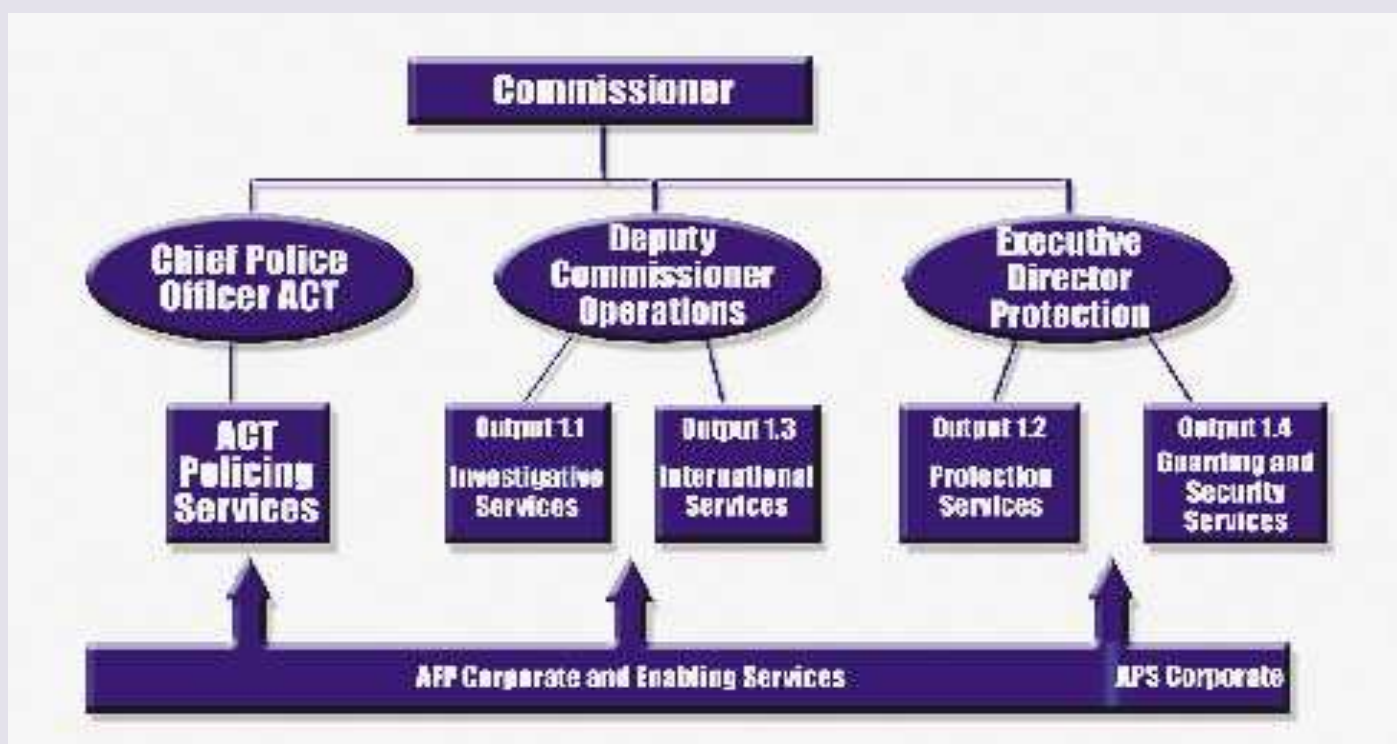
In handing over responsibility for the Service to the AFP, Mr Govey congratulated the APS on the progress it has made as a protective-security organisation.

In accepting the flag Commissioner Keelty said the AFP College was a fitting place to accept the APS, as the College was the home of many AFP corporate symbols and images.

"This is a significant day in the history of the APS and the AFP," he said.

The APS Amendment Bill now identifies the AFP Commissioner as the Agency Head of the APS. This means that, as of July 1, Commissioner Keelty assumed the financial and related accountabilities under the *Financial Management & Accountability Act 1997* for the APS, for which the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department was previously responsible.

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“But an even more important message is that at an operational level it will be business as usual,” Commissioner Keelty said.

The APS will operate as a separate division of the AFP and will continue to undertake its core functions such as guarding Commonwealth property such as Kirribilli House, the Lodge, the Governor-General’s residence, diplomatic and consular premises and other installations such as Pine Gap and the Pacific Island processing centres.

Counter terrorism first response at Australia’s major airports will also remain an APS responsibility. The move of the APS to the AFP will not affect the competition arrangements, under which the APS operates and private security agencies will still be allowed to bid against the APS for Commonwealth guarding contracts.

During the ceremony, Commissioner Keelty emphasised that there was a clear expectation by Government that coordination would be improved as a result of the APS becoming an operating division of the AFP.

In order to facilitate this coordination between the AFP’s roles and functions in the protection-services area, including threat assessments, dignitary protection, diplomatic liaison and counter terrorism and the guarding and security services provided by the APS, a new organisational structure that incorporates the APS as an operational division of the AFP had been developed (*see diagram*).

The organisational structure incorporates the newly established position of Executive Director Protection (EDP). The EDP will work to enhance coordination between APS guarding and security outputs and the AFP’s protection-services output and provide a tangible alignment of the two.

Federal Agent Audrey Fagan has been appointed to the new position.

Federal Agent Fagan recently performed the role of deputy commissioner, was the former General Manager of AFP Protective Security and has led the Project Merida team managing the move of the APS to the AFP.

The Director of the APS, Martin Studdert, will remain as Director but will assume the title General Manager Guarding and Security Services. General Manager Protective Security (AFP), Federal Agent Denis McDermott, and the new position of General Manager Guarding and Security Services will report to the Executive Director Protection.

The Commissioner has also appointed Federal Agent Peter Wood as Director Operations APS. Federal Agent Wood comes with a wealth of operational experience including recent responsibilities as Director of AFP Southern Operations and before that, Director Professional Standards.

“I understand that this is a time of uncertainty and I am committed to sharing information on developments as they occur. The process from this point is one of ongoing consultation,” Commissioner Keelty said.

“We have some major challenges before us and I want to say that I am looking forward to working with the management team in the APS.”

The Commissioner thanked the AFP and APS staff who worked on the AFP/APS Portfolio Working Group and said that the whole process had been conducted in a spirit of good will and cooperation.

As a gesture of good will and comradeship, a number of APS stations around Australia also held morning teas to mark the APS becoming an operating division of the AFP and invited local AFP staff to attend.