

# Minister says farewell

On 6 March 2007, Prime Minister John Howard announced changes to the Ministry and appointed Senator Chris Ellison as Minister for Human Services. This is his farewell message to the AFP.



—Brian Hartigan

Senator Chris Ellison at a recent function at the AFP College.

**Since I was appointed Minister for Justice and Customs in January 2001 I have seen an enormous change in the role of the Australian Federal Police.**

Shortly after my appointment, Mick Keelty was appointed as Commissioner – the first from within the ranks of the AFP.

The events of 9/11, the 2002 Bali bombings and subsequent terrorist attacks have seen the AFP at the forefront of counter-terrorism. Our overseas operations have increased significantly and I am particularly proud of what has been achieved in the area of regional cooperation through building closer and stronger links with regional law enforcement partners. This has also included very important work by the International Deployment Group in such places as East Timor and Solomon Islands.

Greater regional cooperation on law enforcement and counter-terrorism,

strengthened aviation security, and the ongoing task of combating criminal activity such as people-smuggling, drug trafficking, high-tech crime and other threats to the safety and security of Australians have demanded our collective attention, energy and commitment.

On the home front, there have also been considerable changes to meet new law enforcement and security challenges. Better airport policing structures, the establishment of the Australian Crime Commission, the launch of the Australian High Tech Crime Centre and the Online Child Sex Exploitation Team all reflect how the AFP and the Government have identified and responded to emerging and new law enforcement priorities. While the war on drugs has had some success there is more work to be done.

As Minister I have also been pleased with the way significantly increased resources

for the AFP have been put to such effective use.

A particular highlight of my period as your Minister has been the opportunity to meet and get to know many of the professional and dedicated officers of the Australian Federal Police, in Australia and overseas in places such as South East Asia, Cyprus, East Timor, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea and the Pacific.

I have been constantly impressed with the commitment and skill with which you carry out your work in often difficult and dangerous conditions. The contribution by family and loved ones who support officers carrying out their important work should not be forgotten and I am deeply appreciative of this.

The Australian Federal Police is a unique organisation in the work it does and the challenges it faces in protecting the Australian community. I have greatly valued the advice, support and friendship of its members, and in particular that of your Commissioner Mick Keelty. It was with great sadness that my last couple of days in the portfolio were marked by the deaths of Brice Steele and Mark Scott in the Yogyakarta plane crash in the course of their official duties. Both officers represented the strength of character, personal and professional qualities that I had come to associate with the men and women of the Australian Federal Police during my period as Minister.

I will always maintain a close interest in the AFP and would like to wish you all the best for your future endeavours and service.