



19 March 2024

## Opening Statement – Senate Estimates

Good evening Senators.

I am performing the duties of Commissioner, while Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Lesa Gale re-commit to three joint crucial crime-fighting arrangements with Chinese authorities in Beijing.

I cannot stress enough how important these arrangements are – especially as we collaborate to fight illicit drug trafficking.

Taskforce Blaze, a standing operation between the AFP and the Office of China National Narcotics Control Commission, has been running since 2015 and has directly protected Australian lives and those in the Asia Pacific region.

Since its inception, Taskforce Blaze has seized 28 tonnes of illicit drugs and precursors.

Of those 28 tonnes of illicit drugs and precursors seized, more than 11 tonnes of illicit drugs destined for Australia were stopped in China, and the remainder seized by Australian authorities from the information shared between agencies.

Drugs seized include, heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine, MDMA, fentanyl and safrole oil.

Latest reporting shows that on average, one person in Australia dies for every 2.5kg of heroin, every 21kg of amphetamine-type stimulants or every 57kg of cocaine consumed.

Taskforce Blaze has potentially saved 592 Australian lives by stopping more than 12.7 tonnes of methamphetamine, cocaine, MDMA and heroin from reaching our suburbs.

This does not include the lives saved by the seizure of tonnes of precursor chemicals, which can be used to manufacture methamphetamines, and other dangerous drugs.

Some of the most horrific crimes committed in Australia, whether they be murders, vehicle deaths, sexual assaults, child sex abuse or child neglect, have a nexus with illicit drugs.

And those trafficking illicit drugs are a national security threat. They attempt to corrupt officials and key logistics workers, they use the Australian financial system to launder illegal wealth, and they use the proceeds of illicit drug trafficking to bankroll more crime in Australia and our region.



# AFP



Arrangements will also be re-signed with the Ministry of Public Security to combat other crime, including transnational crime.

This year the AFP marks 25 years since the opening of the AFP office in Beijing.

The AFP has a number of agreements, taskforces and memorandums of understanding with international law enforcement agencies.

We are clear-eyed in how we cooperate with international partners. Australia's safety, sovereignty and protecting our way of life are always our guiding principles.

Thank you and I'm happy to take questions.