

AFP COMMISSIONER – OPENING STATEMENT

BUDGET ESTIMATES – MAY 2021 (513 words = 3.5 mins)

1. Good morning Chair and Committee members.
2. I will provide only a brief opening statement this time, given we have appeared before the Committee recently.
3. Acknowledging this is a budget estimates hearing, we welcome the recent funding measures announced by Government, including that:
 - The Government is allocating **\$63.8 million** for the AFP to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse. This includes an additional **\$35.5 million** investment in the AFP to lead a national child protection capability uplift, which will bolster frontline law enforcement efforts to combat child sexual abuse, and
 - **\$9.0 million** to support increased quarantine capacity at the Centre for National Resilience at Howard Springs, in line with the Government’s COVID-19 policy priority to bring Australians home.
4. I am proud that our agency has **grown**, allowing us to more effectively respond to evolving threats, and maximising our impact on the criminal environment.
5. So far in 2020-21, the AFP has:

- **Seized** 21.5 tonnes of illicit drugs and precursors at the border – up from an average of 17.1 tonnes per year for the previous five years; and
 - **Charged** 177 offenders with child abuse offences – up from an average of 102 offenders charged per year for the previous five years.
 - We have also **restrained** \$157 million (gross) in criminal assets this financial year to date, and some \$422 million (gross) over the past two financial years.
6. Through our **International Network**, we work with partners in 33 countries to disrupt serious criminal threats offshore to keep Australia and Australians safe.
- The efforts of our 166 officers overseas every single day, particularly during the challenging conditions of the pandemic, should be recognised as these officers have willingly stood shoulder to shoulder with our law enforcement partners. Some have contracted COVID, and some of their families have too. Yet they have continued to protect Australians from harm.
 - Just one example of our success is **Taskforce Storm** with our Thai law enforcement partners. Since May 2016, the Taskforce has seized more than 9.5 tonnes of drugs that could have reached our community,

mostly methamphetamine, as well as precursor chemicals, in addition to restraining more than \$5 million in criminal assets in Thailand.

7. This year the AFP strengthened partnerships through the establishment of the new **24/7 National Operations and State Services Centre** – the NOSCC – a centrepiece for communications, intelligence collection and dissemination.
 - The NOSCC is the AFP’s ‘front door’ for state, territory and international law enforcement agencies, and Commonwealth partners, and will maximise our operational impact and effect.
8. Before I finish, I would like to take a moment to thank this Committee – as well as the Parliamentary Joint Committees on Law Enforcement, and on Intelligence and Security – for your ongoing interest, engagement and support of the AFP.
9. We understand that the laws and powers with which we are entrusted must be accompanied by appropriate safeguards and external scrutiny.
10. We are committed to providing transparency of our use of powers, and maintaining accountability for our actions.
11. I now welcome your questions.