

AFP Opening Statement – Additional Estimates 2022

(as at 14 February 2022)

- Good evening Chair and Committee.
- We begin 2022 where we left off in 2021, seeing an ever increasing volume of federal crime - the past year underscored that we live in a globalised criminal economy, with actions and events thousands of kilometres away in Colombia, Syria or Turkey, directly impacting on Australians in Cabramatta, Sale or Taroom.
- This is why the AFP's international influence and postings in 33 countries has never been more important to Australia's security.
 - The AFP works with international law enforcement agencies in-country to help bring to justice those offshore offenders who target Australians, Australian businesses and Australian institutions.
- In the past financial year, we recorded **266 disruptions internationally** including in Mexico, Malaysia and the Netherlands. Most of our disruptions address the illicit drug trade, but also include terrorism, child exploitation and cybercrime.
- Next month I will attend the 40th ASEANAPOL conference in Cambodia, where Police Commissioners in our region will discuss the need to forge stronger cooperation in the fight against transnational serious organised crime.
- The AFP's overseas network, including in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, builds trust and makes us a partner of choice.
 - With our policing counterparts, we stay focused on our shared and unwavering commitment to keep our communities safe.
 - We learn and train, we share intelligence and capability and we assist after natural disaster, tragedy and unrest.
- More than 60 members of the AFP were deployed under **Operation SKYRAY**, which assisted the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force to respond to violent protests in late 2021.
 - Many of our officers were deployed at short notice to provide much needed operational support, equipment, vehicles, tools, PPE and medications.
- When I travelled to the Solomon Islands last month, I met with Prime Minister Sogavare and was deeply honoured to present him with a framed collage of images from a recent medal ceremony with Michael and Christine Dunning.

- The Dunnings received several Royal Solomon Island Police Force and AFP posthumous medals on behalf of their son Adam, who, at just 26 years old, was killed while on patrol in Honiara, in December 2004.
- Our partnership with the Royal Solomon Island Police Force goes back 22 years. We will continue to be there for our friends and neighbours, in the Solomon Islands, in Tonga to assist recovery from the recent volcano, and across the Pacific.
- At home, the AFP is at a heightened alert to **protect our community, high-office holders, our democratic institutions and democratic values.**
 - For the past 2 months, ACT Policing and the AFP have been maintaining public order in the ACT in challenging circumstances.
 - To those officers in ACT Policing and AFP members around the country who answered the call to help to ensure public safety, I thank you. Your professionalism and dedication cannot be underplayed.
- Most Australians won't see foreign interference or be targeted by foreign interference.
- But it has the potential to affect every Australian because it erodes democracy and our institutions.
- It has never been more important for the AFP to protect Australia and the way Australians live.
- And that's why the AFP and our partners, particularly ASIO, through the Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce, work so closely together to protect Australians from crimes committed in the shadows.
- Last year, the AFP worked with ASIO and others to bring an individual before the courts on the first foreign interference charges laid since the new offence was introduced in 2018. That committal hearing is due to start in March in Victoria.
- The AFP is aware of increased espionage and foreign interference threats.
 - In the past 18 months, the Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce has achieved a number of successful disruptions, most significantly in relation to democratic institutions.
- While the Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce's disruption efforts have been successful in target-hardening the physical environment, challenges in the cyber domain are ever present, including hostile foreign actors undertaking cyber-enabled espionage.
- A priority continues to be the development of national arrangements to identify and respond to interference against diaspora communities in Australia.

- This type of interference can include monitoring and harassing sections of the community seen as dissidents by authoritarian states.
- It may also involve attempts to silence members of the community from criticising the policies of regimes in countries to which they maintain links.
- Foreign interference is an insidious and resource-intensive crime, and one that I expect will continue to grow and converge with other crime types in Australia, but the AFP, ASIO and other partners have the technical expertise and legislative frameworks to arrest and bring offenders to justice.
- In the lead up to this year's election, I am also concerned about the prevalence of disinformation and the impact this can have on the integrity of our institutions and the election itself.
- Where disinformation reaches a criminal threshold – particularly where it urges or advocates violence - the AFP will be exercising the full force of its powers.
- We have already demonstrated we won't hesitate to act - for example, we charged an individual with computer, carriage service and electoral offences, for his role in an offensive spam email campaign and sending over 23 million messages during the 2019 Wentworth and 2020 Eden-Monaro by-elections.
 - The individual will be sentenced later this year.
- We're also focusing effort on crime that directly affects Australians, every day: **Cyber crime** is more than the break-and-enter of the 21st Century, its prevalence is increasing year on year, and we are building partnerships across government and with industry, and building bridges to the community, to stem the tide of this insidious crime.
 - For example, we reached out to a major bank to stop millions of dollars from leaving Australia, after we identified the victim of a scam.
- With these challenges in mind, it's not enough to just keep pace: We must be a **step ahead**.
 - I was pleased to travel to the US in late 2021 to witness the signing of the **CLOUD ACT agreement** between the US and Australia, which will facilitate our timely access to key electronic data offshore - to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute serious crime.
 - Since my visit to the US, President Biden has signed two executive orders to better address transnational serious organised crime, demonstrating the extent of this shared problem around the world.
 - And that's why, in the **Global Policing Innovation Exchange** we're partnering with like-minded agencies and the best minds around the world to think innovatively about modern policing challenges.

- During the pandemic, the AFP led virtual sessions with senior officers in over a dozen countries dealing with common challenges, to showcase practical, front-line capabilities, research and development.
- And as Chair of the Five Eyes Law Enforcement Group, which comprises the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, New Zealand Police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, US Drug Enforcement Administration, US Federal Bureau of Investigation, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, United Kingdom National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Head of UK Counter Terrorism Policing, I will host my counterparts in Sydney later this year to ensure we can share the intelligence and capability needed to take on known and emerging threats.
- Our international law enforcement partners look to the AFP to help counter these threats, and in part it is because of our world-leading legislation.
- I am very grateful for **new laws** passed by the Parliament last year, which are allowing us to target criminality from all angles:
 - We are now using the **Identify and Disrupt Act** to obtain warrants to target alleged child sex offenders, and drug, firearm and money laundering activities.
 - The new **Extended Supervision Order** scheme will assist to manage the ongoing risk that terrorism offenders pose to the community on release from prison.
 - And amendments in the **Economic Disruption Act** are helping the AFP remove profit from serious organised crime, a more-than \$47 billion scourge in Australia.
- I would also like to acknowledge that this year is the **20th anniversary of the Bali Bombings in Indonesia**. It was a tragedy that shocked and devastated Australians, and one that is very close to the heart of the AFP and families of the victims.
- Twenty years ago we grieved together for the 202 lives lost, including 88 Australians.
- But just hours after that deadly blast, the AFP deployed to Indonesia to work with the Indonesian National Police to help bring those responsible to justice – and we did.
- That partnership between the AFP and the Indonesian National Police has continued and has strengthened over those past two decades.
- I now welcome your questions.