

AFP COMMISSIONER'S OPENING STATEMENT

SPILL-OVER BUDGET ESTIMATES – DECEMBER 2020

- Good morning Chair and committee members. I would like to make a (brief) opening statement.
- To begin with, I would like to introduce to you the AFP's new Chief Operating Officer, Ms Charlotte Tressler, who commenced with us on 26 October 2020.
- Ms Tressler brings a wealth of experience from across the Commonwealth public service and private sector, which will be of great benefit to the AFP. Ms Tressler will be instrumental in implementing a number of cultural measures which are a strong focus of mine.
- While it has only been a short time since I last appeared before you, the AFP has achieved a number of significant operational outcomes which I'd like to highlight.
- On 5 November 2020, the AFP made its first arrest for a foreign interference offence, since the Commonwealth passed the National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Bill in 2018.
- The charge follows a year-long investigation by the Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce, led by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the AFP.
- This week AFP investigators have arrested another convicted terrorist, recently released from prison, for a breach of his control orders.
- This is the third such arrest since July this year.
- The AFP's counter-terrorism teams across the country are absolutely committed to keeping Australians safe, and investigating enduring risk is especially challenging.

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- This is resource-intensive work, and I would like to acknowledge the tenacity and skill of our investigators and partner agencies.
- When the safety and security of Australians is on the line, we don't give up.
- Another example of the AFP's tenacity is the 18 November arrest of a man in Queensland, as part of a nine-year investigation into foreign bribery charges.
- These charges relate to a 1.46 billion US dollar oil deal in Iraq, in the fragile aftermath of war.
- Foreign bribery investigations tend to be extremely complex, involving forensic financial detail across jurisdictions under challenging circumstances.
- These cases cut to the heart of how Australians and Australian companies behave overseas, and how their conduct reflects on us as a country.
- I'm extremely proud of the sustained effort that has led to this result.
- The AFP is also continuing to drive forward in our commitment to protect children from harm. Recently, together with our partners, we arrested 15 males on 836 charges as part of Operation Arkstone.
- This investigation uncovered a network of alleged child sex offenders impacting 46 Australian victims, including 16 from a childcare centre.
- I would like to recognise the efforts of the AFP investigators and our New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia police and United States Homeland Security Investigations counterparts in uncovering and disrupting this syndicate.

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- The tireless efforts of police to identify offenders in online forums, while being exposed to horrific content, prevents further harm being inflicted on the children involved.
- The AFP will continue to work closely with our partners to dismantle offender networks and ensure our community's most vulnerable members are protected.
- New legislation was proposed in Parliament this week to strengthen the AFP and ACIC's ability to identify offenders and criminal activities online – including on the dark web.
- These new powers will help us to apply existing tools in a more targeted way, to combat the increasing volume of insidious criminal activity online. The powers will be particularly useful in our continued battle against child abuse, extremism, and trafficking illicit goods such as drugs and firearms.
- The AFP will engage with the Australian public to explain the necessity of these reforms as they are considered by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security over the coming months.
- Community engagement is critical, and we will continue to improve in this area as we are strongly committed to ensuring the AFP is reflective of the community we serve.
- Last month, during NAIDOC week I was pleased to launch the AFP's new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Development Unit.
- The intent of the Development Unit is two-fold.
 - First, to promote full and unhindered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the AFP workforce.
 - Second, to ensure a culturally competent policing service to the Australian community.

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- The Development Unit will be aligned with the current Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy and will contribute to improving representation within our workforce, which as at 31 October 2020 stood at 2.4%.
- We are committed to effective initiatives, appropriately measured and evaluated. That's why the AFP will now measure our organisational health through a Cultural Health Framework.
- We are also continuing to implement our new health model, SHIELD, which will embed health and wellbeing services into the day-to-day operations of AFP Members, former and retired Members, Reservists and their families.
- I am committed to achieving an AFP that advocates and showcases growth and learning; is inclusive at all levels of leadership; promotes values-based behaviour; and one that has sound workforce composition and design.
- I want the AFP to be an employer of choice for all people.
- During the pandemic, the AFP has seen an increase in the number of people searching for information about careers in the AFP – from 138 in 2019, to 27,686 in 2020.
- I take this as a strong sign that people are interested in the good work the AFP does, and that they want to play a meaningful role in serving our community, and keeping Australians safe.
- Senators, today is the AFP's Foundation Day: the forty-first anniversary of our formation in our current form. But I'd note that federal policing has been serving Australia under one name or another for the past 103 years.

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- While we celebrate our history and our successes, we remain committed to keeping our community safe, and safeguarding Australia's national interests.
- I welcome your questions this morning.