

**Supplementary Estimates – AFP Opening Statement  
As at 25 October 2021**

1. Good morning Chair and committee.
2. When I first started as the Australian Federal Police Commissioner this time 2 years ago, I pledged to be transparent and as open with the Australian public as possible.
3. As a law enforcement agency, the AFP is accountable to the parliament and the community we serve. It is imperative the AFP explains how we use taxpayer money, and why and how we use laws that keep Australians, and Australia's interests, safe.

**COUNTER TERRORISM**

4. **The information I will place on the record today is the most open the AFP has been in a public forum about the threat of terrorism.**
5. As we all know the best type of law enforcement is prevention, and this applies in the counter-terrorism space. As lockdowns end and borders re-open, Australians need to remain vigilant.
6. The threat of terrorism remains at PROBABLE, but there have been some significant shifts, in the diversity and complexity of the environment, since the pandemic started almost a year-and-a-half ago.
7. The threat of terrorism has not dissipated. In fact, the pandemic, extended lockdowns and more time spent online, has in some cases, made it easier for extremists to recruit.
8. Increased anti-government sentiment, proliferation of conspiracy theories, physical isolation and more time spent online have increased the threat, facilitating local and transnational links between individuals and groups, and sharing of ideas among extremist communities.
9. **Across the world, including in Australia, we have individuals who are now pre-loaded with extremist ideology, and the end of restrictions on movement will make it harder for law enforcement.**

10. However, the community can be reassured that the Joint Counter Terrorism Teams, comprising the AFP, ASIO, state and territory police (including the Crime Commission in NSW) have maintained our efforts to ensure public safety, particularly through the COVID period, and will continue as we move to a post-COVID world.
11. Religiously-motivated violent extremism remains the biggest threat.
12. Eighty-five per cent of investigations relate to RMVE, while the remaining 15 per cent relate to ideologically motivated violent extremism.
13. Last week, a UK MP was stabbed by an individual who reportedly had been in a government anti-terrorism scheme.
14. Norway's security service believes an individual, accused of killing five people with a bow and arrow last week, had been radicalised.
15. And closer to home, NZ Police shot dead an ISIL supporter who stabbed six people in an Auckland supermarket.
16. This has all happened within the past eight weeks.
17. The AFP and our partners are protecting Australians from terrorism on a number of fronts, including the concerning trend of young children occupying the attention of law enforcement agencies.
18. Children as young as 13 years old - not even old enough to get their learners' driver's licence - are planning and negotiating with others online to carry out catastrophic terror attacks.
19. Some of these youth feel isolated or do not feel like they belong, and so they retreat to the online world, looking to connect with someone, including RMVE and IMVE individuals.
20. Research on how vulnerable children – including those with learning difficulties or developmental conditions – are being recruited is underway

now. The AFP will work with stakeholders in relation to this issue because the AFP is dedicated to helping those vulnerable to radicalization.

21. We need parents and carers to understand who their children are communicating with online.
22. I implore parents to call the AFP if they are worried their child is being targeted by individuals with extremist views.
23. Early intervention can divert children from this path. Where possible, we want to keep youth out of the criminal justice system.
24. As I said, RMVE remains our biggest terrorism threat, however, the growth in IMVE is providing challenges, because of
  - its rural and regional presence,
  - its influence over young people,
  - the high levels of security consciousness and
  - access to firearms among adherents.
25. The IMVE cohort is extremely interconnected, especially online.
26. Their views are diverse and include supports for nationalist, white-supremacy and neo-Nazism.
27. The AFP has detected a number of threats, and concentrated investigative efforts on individuals or small networks (three to four individuals) who are not aligned to members of a specific nationalist or racist group.

### **AFGHANISTAN/TALIBAN**

28. Law enforcement is also cognisant of global instability, including the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan.
29. The Australian Islamist cohort is influenced by both the ISIL and AQ ideology, however there is a greater number aligned to the ISIL ideology.

30. We expect that ISIL will transform and re-establish transnational links to increase their ability to direct or influence terrorism in other parts of the globe.

## HRTO

31. Other significant threats are the terrorist offenders released from Australian jails. Our global partners, such as the UK and NZ, are experiencing similar challenges.

32. Eighteen terrorist offenders are scheduled for release from prison before 2026, and 54 are due for release by 2060.

33. Since February 2019, the AFP has applied for and obtained more control orders than in the 15 years prior.

34. Seven individuals have been arrested and charged for breaching the conditions of their control orders since July 2020 – that is 70 per cent of individuals on Control Orders.

35. The community safety risk posed by the reintegration of convicted terrorist offenders into the community will be an ongoing challenge.

36. I won't go into the numbers of police and cost involved to monitor these offenders; however, this is a significant investment of police resources.

37. However, I will provide some details about a person recently released from prison, who was assessed to be a potential domestic threat.

38. Significant resourcing was required **just for this one offender**. The resources applied for this individual is replicated for almost every terror offender released.

39. Another offender who was recently released, almost immediately went online to access information about executions, beheadings and torture.

40. The AFP has established a dedicated HRTTO capability to manage the risk of terrorist offenders.

41. The Government has provided the AFP additional resources to address the requirements of HRTTO management. And we acknowledge the ESO legislation that we hope will soon/has been passed by the Parliament to assist to manage the public safety risks presented by these offenders as well as rehabilitate and reintegrate these individuals into the community.

### **SLAID**

42. The online environment should not be a safe haven for terrorists, or for criminal syndicates or child abusers.

43. It is legislation like the recently passed *Surveillance Legislation Amendment (Identify and Disrupt) Act 2021* that will help keep Australians safe.

44. The three new powers in this Act will significantly enhance how the AFP investigates serious cyber-enabled crime.

45. Our investigators are already strategising how they will use the new powers in active investigations to identify, target and disrupt offenders - including those relating to terrorism, large drug importations and distribution of child abuse material.

46. We look forward to applying for and utilising these powers, and working with our oversight bodies, once all of the administrative arrangements are settled.

47. Encrypted communication platforms are in many cases a significant barrier for the AFP.

48. Transnational serious organised crime offenders rely on encrypted platforms to carry out their criminality.

## **OPERATION IRONSIDE**

49. Today is the first time I have appeared before you since Operation Ironside was revealed.

50. Operation Ironside was enabled by a unique, global law enforcement partnerships, particularly with the FBI.

51. The FBI secretly operated a dedicated encrypted platform named ANOM that was released into the criminal underworld.

52. The AFP provided the FBI with the technical ability to decrypt and read these encrypted communications in real time.

53. The AFP and FBI dedicated three years to this operation. As a result, in Australia alone, Operation Ironside has led to:

- a. **711** search warrants executed
- b. **302** offenders charged with **806** individual charges
- c. **29** threats to kill identified
- d. **6** clandestine labs shut down
- e. **139** weapons/firearms seized
- f. Almost **\$49** million seized
- g. **5,055** kg of drugs seized by Australian agencies

54. Today, I reiterate that more significant action is in-train and planned. I expect a significant number of alleged criminals to be arrested over the coming months.

## **CYBER**

55. Law enforcement agencies around the world are investigating more effort against cyber-enabled crime.

56. These are the crimes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Instead of a burglar breaking into your home or business, these cyber criminals, often tens of thousands of

kilometres away, are taking money out of Australians' wallets and nest eggs, holding businesses to ransom and stealing the IP of academia.

57. This is the next frontier of crime, and the AFP and our partners will work with governments and global law enforcement networks to ensure the long arm of the AFP reaches criminals no matter where they are in the world.

58. On that note, I'd like to acknowledge the work of our officers, around Australia and offshore in posts around the world, who continue to navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to achieve operational success through these challenges.

### **OPERATION COVINA**

59. And finally, I want to comment briefly on the alleged sexual assault at Parliament House in 2019, simply to say that I will be limited in what I can say today.

60. This matter is now before the court in the ACT, and any public commentary has the potential to impact the outcomes of that trial.

61. In particular, ACT law prevents the use of a victim's name in a public forum while court proceedings are ongoing.

### **CONCLUSION**

62. I now welcome your questions.