

# September 11

## Commemoration

**On September 11 Executive member Karl David took part in the commemoration ceremony at Ground Zero, the scene of the horrendous terrorist attack in New York City. This is his story.**

**T**hirteen years ago I telephoned Sergeant Kent Strickland of NSW Police. It was a call that would change his life. I asked him to raise \$1,000, fly to Horsham in western Victoria and shave all his hair off. Since then Kent has played a major role in raising nearly \$19 million dollars for children with cancer.

This year it was payback time. Kent telephoned me in late August. His request: fly to New York, and participate in a multi-national police march into Ground Zero - New York on September 11 and commemorate the 10 Australian lives lost in the Terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001.

The event is arranged by 'Protect the Protectors' based in the United Kingdom. For the past five years more than 200 Bobbies have attended New York City and marched into Ground Zero to form an 'Honour Guard' for the grieving families of the 2,752 victims.

I was supported by The Police Association and while the NSW police command supported Kent's participation, the Victoria Police Force did not support mine.

Kent and I were part of an international police contingent, comprising 200 English Bobbies, three Irish Police, 40 members of the New Zealand police rugby team and one German officer. Each year at least 67 British police, representing each one of the 67 nationals killed in the attack attend the march. From our accommodation at the Marriot in Brooklyn I could see the two lights representing the fallen towers piercing the skyline.

My first night was spent in a bar in Brooklyn, where I spoke to a bunch of NYPD sergeants. All had attended the disaster and played various roles during and since September 11. What I didn't know was the health problems being experienced by nearly every one of those police officers. The towers were built in the 1970's and contained a lethal cocktail of banned building materials such as asbestos. When the towers collapsed, the core of the site burned at 1,000 degrees Celsius. The City of Brooklyn lies across the water from New York, similar in proximity to Melbourne City and Yarraville. When the towers came down, Brooklyn was covered in 5 inches of toxic dust. The rubble was conveyed to Staten Island for sorting. One officer pulled down his t-shirt revealing a myriad of sores across his chest. He said, "I have been to every doctor and specialist I can find. No-one can tell me what this is. I can't breath right anymore. Many of my colleagues are down to 27 percent lung capacity. And it's not just the cops and firemen at ground zero, most police officers working on Staten Island over the

past five years are all experiencing the same severe health problems. You don't think of this stuff at the time, but now look at us."

On September 11 we all paraded outside the Marriott to march to Ground Zero. The flags of the United States, United Kingdom and Australia were to lead the parade and I was honoured to be our flag bearer.

Standing at the perimeter ledge of Ground Zero, I proudly held the Australian flag as they slowly called out the names of each victim in alphabetical order. Extra messages were read out from victims' children, widows, husbands and others. Ones that I found particularly hard to deal with were girlfriends, boyfriends and fiancée's paying tribute – lives cut short before they even began. Whenever I struggled to hold back tears, I glanced across only to see other police with tears rolling down their cheeks. While they would never admit it, I saw a tear in the eye of a kiwi rugby player.

You have to stand at the edge of this place to realise the enormity of the catastrophe. Each building was one complete acre at the base and the two buildings side by side at an angle cover an area of almost five acres. At the base of the towers were shopping malls, the New York Subway, gardens and community areas. Standing alone near the northern perimeter is a cross made of the remnants of two steel girders dragged from the rubble with a piece of plane fuselage draped over it.

We marched out of Ground Zero in front of the world media and made our way to the British

Memorial Garden that honours the 67 fallen UK Nationals.

At the end of the ceremony Kent and I had afternoon tea with Australia's Consul General, former South Australian Premier John Olsen and, more importantly, some of the family members of our ten Australians who perished. They were particularly pleased at the attendance of Australian police officers.

Being part of this moving event is something I will never forget. The numerous times we were stopped in the street and thanked for attending, and the incredible way we were accepted by everyone of all colours, races, and religions reinforced that we are one community and that violence and intolerance affects everyone. Whilst we continue to allow separatism, elitism, and the placing of one group of people over another in our own communities there will always be a small breeding ground for what ultimately becomes terrorism.

Event organizers plan to have a



Sergeant Karl David at Ground Zero

police officer from each country to stand as an honour guard for each of their fallen nationals in coming years. That means Australia will need 10 police officers to attend next year. I know that I will return again regardless of who does or doesn't endorse it.

*Members that would like to know more information about the 2007 'Protect the Protectors' event in New York can contact Sergeant Karl David at Melbourne East Police Station.*

## The Association and the Force sign historic memorandum of understanding

**T**he Police Association and the Victoria Police Force signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that establishes a framework in which the parties can co-operatively resolve major issues in dispute last month.

This development followed a critical meeting between the Association and the Chief Commissioner on 28 September and the recently negotiated outcome regarding the Armed Offenders dispute.

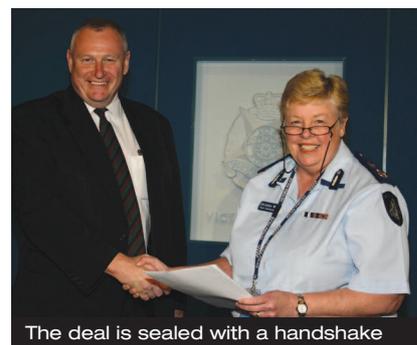
The MoU provides for the establishment of an Executive Taskforce, comprising of authorised decision makers from the Association and the Force, who will meet on a regular basis in an

endeavour to achieve agreed outcomes on significant matters that have been in dispute for some months and on issues that could emerge in the future.

The agenda of the new Executive Taskforce will include, but is not limited, to:

- The new enterprise bargaining agreement
- A review of consultative arrangements between the parties
- The relationship between the Force and the Office of Police Integrity (OPI)
- Major issues in the past 12 months and current and future issues as identified by the parties.

The Executive Taskforce will agree on a regular meeting schedule at



The deal is sealed with a handshake

the first meeting. The parties have agreed to ensure that appropriate administrative support is provided to the Executive Taskforce.

The MoU came into operation immediately and will remain in force for 12 months. At the end of this initial period the effectiveness of the MoU will be reviewed.