

# National Police Memorial provides a place for reflection



Commissioner Keelty speaks at the Memorial Service.



Governor-General Quentin Bryce lays a wreath at the Memorial.



Constable Louise Yates leading the riderless horse.

**The National Police Remembrance Day service on 29 September 2008 was one of the first events Governor-General Quentin Bryce attended in her new role. She witnessed a moving 40-minute service honouring the memory of those Australian police officers who died while on duty.**

The Governor-General was one of several dignitaries who laid a wreath at the memorial during the service.

The annual National Police Remembrance Day service began as dusk fell on a chilly spring evening, in the presence of more than 300 guests.

A parade of police flags preceded a riderless horse which is symbolic of the absence of those officers being commemorated. The riderless horse carried a pair of boots reversed in the stirrups as a symbol of respect and mourning. South Australia Police bugler Senior Constable First Class Paul West played the *Police Requiescant*, supported by the AFP Pipes and Drums, the AFP Mounted Cadre, the Royal Military College Band, the Australian Rugby Choir and police ceremonial officers from all Australian jurisdictions.

In his address to those gathered, AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty pointed out that no Australian police officer had died while on duty during 2008, something that had not happened since 1944. Commissioner Keelty then offered his condolences to representatives of New Zealand and countries in the south-west Pacific region whose police forces had lost seven officers in the past year.

“Five more Australian names were added to the memorial this morning,” he said. “These names have been identified as part of the ongoing research, historical research that is undertaken to ensure that all eligible officers find their place on this Memorial.”

Commissioner Keelty said it was important to remember that each one of the 731 names now present on the Memorial represented someone’s spouse, parent or child who had been killed protecting the community.

“National Police Remembrance Day is a day of solemn reflection and gives each family a chance to draw support from others who have lost loved ones and from the wider community,” he said.

The AFP’s Recognition and Ceremonial team has caretaker responsibility for the Memorial. Sergeant Craig Skinner, the principal organiser of the service, said the team’s ongoing role was to promote the Memorial, particularly to interstate visitors.

“We publicise the Memorial in a variety of ways, including through the ACT Tourist Information Centre, and it helps that the Memorial is so close to such a well-known attraction as the National Carillon,” he said. “On occasion, we have used the bells of the Carillon as part of the Police Remembrance Day service.

“Engraved in the stonework of the Memorial’s forecourt are dozens of quotes from relatives and friends of the fallen police officers and it is not uncommon to see visitors wandering through the memorial engrossed in reading the inscriptions.

“The National Police Memorial is not just a once-a-year venue. Our aim is to encourage people, whether they have direct police connections or not, to visit the Memorial and contemplate the service these officers have given to their communities throughout Australia,” Sergeant Skinner said.

Photos: Mel Hill