

New fleet to fight criminals

THE "Water Rats" will play a major role in protecting NSW from the threat of a terrorist attack.

A funding increase of \$26.9 million will go to upgrading water police vessels and improving technology.

"Modern water policing must take into account the threats of terrorism and drug and gun trafficking," Police Minister John Watkins said.

"An upgraded fleet will provide an increased response to marine crime, search and rescue, and the interception of criminals on the waterways."

Mr Watkins said the project was part of a 15-year marine fleet program that would mean vessels were replaced once they reached between three and five years of age.

In 2002 the Marine Area Command bought two 22m ocean vessels, seven 16m patrol vessels, three 10.5m harbour-class vessels, and 10 fast-response runabouts.

"The Maritime Area Command has a base in every navi-

gable port in NSW, providing a visible and proactive deterrent to terrorist activity and maritime crime," Mr Watkins said.

"It is taking an increasing role in counter-terrorism with the creation last year of the Maritime Operational Support Team."

Water Police are stationed in Sydney, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Newcastle, Broken Bay, Botany Bay, Port Kembla and Eden.

Task force Gain — set up to investigate gang-related shootings in Sydney's southwest — will receive funding for another six months, while operation Viking will receive another \$3 million in funding.

It wasn't all good news however, with 27 police stations deemed in need of urgent work having to wait until the next Budget.

About \$40 million a year is needed for works to stations including Bowral, Fairfield, Campsie, Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Liverpool, Orange, Revsby and Wyong.



Ready for terror threats . . . Water Police will get upgraded vessels and technology