



Committee recommends budget relief for Australian intelligence agencies

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security has today fulfilled its statutory oversight responsibilities with the tabling of two reports.

The Committee has reported on its review of the administration and expenditure of the Australian Intelligence Agencies for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 financial years, finding that agencies are currently overseeing their administration and expenditure effectively.

Committee Chair, Mr Dan Tehan, pointed out however that ‘for a number of years now, the Committee has monitored the impact of the efficiency dividend and other savings measures on agencies. The Committee sought assurances in this review that each agency continued to have the necessary resources to address and target Australia’s national security priorities to the degree necessary to protect Australians against threats to national security.’

‘The Committee received the clear message that any further cuts will lead to capability reductions. The Committee has therefore recommended that the continued application of the efficiency dividend and other savings measures to the agencies comprising the Australian Intelligence Community be reviewed’ Mr Tehan said.

In a separate report, the Committee stated its support for the listing of Boko Haram and the re-listing of the Islamic State as terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code.

Recognising the increasing violence by Boko Haram, including attacks on schools, markets, churches, residential areas and bus interchanges that have killed hundreds of civilians, as well as the kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls in April 2014, the Committee stated its full support for this listing.

Similarly, the Committee fully supported the re-listing of the Islamic State.

‘As one of the world’s deadliest and most active terrorist organisations, the Committee supports the re-listing on the basis that the group continues to engage in and advocate terrorist attacks. The Committee considers that the strong links to Australia are a significant additional factor in the proscription of this group. We’ve heard that there are about 60 Australians fighting in Syria and Iraq, with about another 100 people in Australia believed to be providing active support’ Mr Tehan said.

Since 2005, the Islamic State has been listed by the Australian Government under names including al-Qa’ida in Iraq and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The Committee recognised that the current listing has been revised to provide legal certainty and validity under the Criminal Code in response to the group’s announced name change, expansion of its operating area and announcement of an Islamic caliphate.

A full copy of the reports and further information about these inquiries can be accessed via the Committee’s website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/pjcis>.

For media comment, please contact the Office of the Chair, Dan Tehan MP, on 6277 4393 (Parliament House) or 03 5572 1100 (Electorate).

For inquiry information, please contact the Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 2360 or email pjcis@aph.gov.au.