

Review of Administration and Expenditure No.16 (2016–2017)



Australian Government

Office of National Assessments

**Submission to the
Parliamentary Joint Committee
on Intelligence and Security**

**Review of Administration
and Expenditure No.16**

**Financial Year 2016–2017
Unclassified Summary**

November 2017

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Unclassified Summary of ONA PJCIS Report for Financial Year 2016–17

Introduction

The Office of National Assessments (ONA) concerns itself exclusively with international issues of importance to Australia. ONA is a statutory body that reports directly to the Prime Minister. ONA is independent of any department or authority and the Director-General of ONA is not subject to external direction on the content of assessments.

ONA was established under the *Office of National Assessments Act 1977 (ONA Act)* and began operations on 20 February 1978.

ONA's Director-General attends meetings of the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC), and is a standing member of the Secretaries Committee on National Security (SCNS) and the National Intelligence Coordination Committee (NICC).

The *ONA Act* sets out three primary functions for the office:

- reporting and assessment on matters of political, strategic and economic significance to Australia
- coordination of Australia's foreign intelligence activities, and
- evaluation of Australia's foreign intelligence activities.

External accountability

A detailed legislative framework defines and regulates Australian intelligence community (AIC) powers, and provides three pillars of oversight for ONA: Ministers; Parliament; and the independent Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS).

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

The Director-General appeared before the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) on 30 March 2017 to discuss ONA's submission, Review of Administration and Expenditure No. 15 (provided to the Committee in late 2016), which reported on activities undertaken in the 2015/16 financial year.

Senate Committee for Finance and Public Administration

The Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee has coverage of the PM&C portfolio for the regular hearings into Budget Estimates. ONA was not called to appear before the Committee in the reporting period.

ONA responded to seven written Questions on Notice over the reporting period.

Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security

The *Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security Act 1986 (IGIS Act)* provides the Inspector-General with the authority to conduct enquiries and inspections with respect to a wide range of ONA's operations.

IGIS conducted two routine reviews of ONA's application of the privacy guidelines during this reporting period.

Public interest disclosure (PID)

The IGIS oversees the operation of the PID scheme in ONA. In accordance with requirements set out in the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (PID Act)* ONA participated in the IGIS annual survey addressing PID operations for the reporting period. In our response to the IGIS survey, we reported that there had been no PID cases or PID investigations undertaken during the 2015/16 period.

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Legislative changes affecting ONA's administration

There were no legislative changes that affected the administration of ONA during the 2015/16 year.

Determination made under Section 105D of the PGPA Act

In accordance with a determination made under Section 105D of the PGPA Act, the tabling in Parliament of ONA's Annual Report is not required and it must not be published. Under this same determination, the ONA Corporate Plan must not be published.

Budget

The operations of ONA are funded through departmental appropriations. Total annual appropriations received in 2016–17 was \$35.343m which includes Departmental Capital Budget (DCB) funding of \$3.884m.

ONA prepares annual financial statements in accordance with provisions outlined in the *PGPA Act*. The ANAO scrutinises the ONA's accounts and audits our financial statements. ONA's accounts were issued an unmodified audit report by the ANAO again this year.

People management

The people of ONA are our most valuable asset. We rely on their expertise and skills to maintain the efficacy and reputation of our analysis, open source collection, coordination role and corporate services. Effective workforce planning, selection and employment screening, focused learning and development and a tailored performance management system provide crucial support to our people.

ONA's workforce is made up of four employment groups:

- analysts
- open source collectors and analysts
- coordinators and evaluators, and
- enablers (those who provide corporate support).

The interesting and challenging nature of work in ONA, along with our flexible working arrangements and appropriate remuneration, provides a solid platform to attract staff.

Over 2016–17, ONA made significant gains on our diversity and inclusiveness goals. We updated our Diversity Action Plan, to embed domestic and family violence workplace initiatives; we achieved our 2018 gender stretch target figure for our EL2 cohort (38%, compared to our 2018 target of 30%); and we made meaningful advances on our Indigenous goals and initiatives, as well as our activities with the Australian Network on Disability's programs.

ONA launched its mentoring program earlier in the year and conducted workshops and produced resource material for mentors and mentees.

Security

ONA applies robust and effective security arrangements and maintained compliance with the Protective Security Policy Framework requirements.