



Australian Government
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STRATEGIC POLICY AND INTELLIGENCE GROUP

OVERVIEW 2016-17

The acting Deputy Secretary Strategic Policy and Intelligence, Mr Marc Ablong, is currently responsible for the three Defence Intelligence Agencies – the Defence Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Signals Directorate and the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation. He also has stewardship of Defence’s strategic, international, industry and naval shipbuilding policy.

The *2016 Defence White Paper*, released in February 2016, provided substantial intelligence investments—in terms of both people and capabilities. This includes increased investment to strengthen Defence’s intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities as well as modernised, all-source intelligence systems supported by enhanced information processing capabilities. The Defence Intelligence Agencies have continued to strengthen their intelligence capabilities in line with *2016 Defence White Paper* guidance during 2016-17.

In June 2017, the Independent Intelligence Review was released. Implementation of the review will result in a number of changes to the structure and organisation of the Defence Intelligence Agencies into the next reporting period. The Independent Intelligence Review recommended that the Australian Signals Directorate become a statutory authority, reporting directly to the Minister for Defence, and that the Australian Signals Directorate take formal responsibility for the Australian Cyber Security Centre.

During 2016-17, the Defence Intelligence Organisation continued to provide valuable all-source intelligence assessments, in support of the Australian Defence Force and Defence policy formulation. The Defence Intelligence Organisation continues to prioritise the professionalisation of its staff – the quality of its analytic output is underpinned by focused and sustained efforts to attract, recruit, develop and retain high-quality intelligence professionals.

The Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation has undergone a highly successful period of expansion during this reporting period, particularly in terms of workforce and the further development of Australia’s Geospatial-Intelligence (GEOINT) capability. This growth is driven by the Government’s deliberate decision to invest in GEOINT-related capabilities in both the First Principles Review of Defence and the *2016 Defence White Paper*. The Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation’s growth has been fuelled primarily through: an emphasis on recruitment and training to build a stronger GEOINT workforce; the progression of a major Defence White Paper project to provide an enhanced commercial satellite imagery exploitation capability for Defence; and the integration of staff from the Australian Hydrographic Office into the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation. On 16 October 2017, the Defence Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 was passed by the Australian Senate, and has now received Royal Assent. The passage of this piece of legislation is the final necessary milestone to enable to full consolidation of the Australian Hydrographic Office into the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation.

The Australian Signals Directorate released a number of products in 2016-17, including the second Australian Cyber Security Centre Threat Report in October 2016. The 2017 ACSC Conference was also held during this reporting period. The Conference is the largest cyber security themed conference in Australia.

The Defence Intelligence Agencies continued to place significant emphasis on ensuring that their activities comply with the *Intelligence Services Act 2001* and other relevant legislation. This was achieved through mandatory and comprehensive training of staff, in-house governance and regular liaison with the Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security.

The Defence Intelligence Agencies also maintained strong and effective international relationships. Defence intelligence collection and assessments are valued by Australia's international intelligence and security partners. In turn, Defence benefits from this close cooperation by drawing on the collection and assessments of our international partners.

The Defence Intelligence Agencies reinforced their commitment to pursue innovative recruitment and retention strategies, amid increasing competition for talent. Initiatives to attract and retain skilled ADF and APS personnel include targeted university recruitment, increased flexibility and incentives for high priority technical skills.