

Chapter 3

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

3.1 At just over six months since the Act received Royal Assent, it is clear that much has been done to set the groundwork for the two year implementation period: the Steering Group has been appointed which includes representatives from industry, research and the university sector; a legislation sub-group has been formed; the pilot programs have been planned; and new materials are available specifically for the research and university sectors. The committee is encouraged by the progress which has been made and looks forward to seeing the Steering Group's first report.

3.2 However the committee notes that a number of submitters have raised concerns about the way in which the Steering Group's work is proceeding including:

- confidentiality conditions imposed on Steering Group members;
- the type and amount of information made publicly available on the Steering Group's website; and
- the need for more certainty regarding implementation of the regulations and their impact on industry.

3.3 The committee is hopeful that submitters, through their representatives on the Steering Group, will be able to resolve these issues. The committee encourages Defence to assist the Steering Group in its efforts to promote awareness of the Act and communicate clearly with the university and research sectors about their responsibilities under the Act.

3.4 The committee notes that the implementation period also provides an opportunity for DECO to examine the timeliness of processing applications. While this matter may not be a direct consequence of the new legislation, DECO should take note of the concerns raised during Budget Estimates and if examination of the processing of applications does identify problems, these can be resolved through the implementation period.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that DECO examine the timeliness of processing applications and provide a report to the committee prior to the committee's next six-monthly report. The committee is particularly interested in instances in which there have been delays in processing applications, and what mechanisms are in place to ensure the implementation of the Act does not cause problems in processing applications.

Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens

Chair