

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Program: Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission

Question No. SBE16/073

Senator Reynolds asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2016:

Senator REYNOLDS: Thank you. I am conscious of time. Mr Dawson, can you just tell us about the merger of the ACC and CrimTrac. Are you seeing benefits? Is that enhancing the work that you are able to do?

Mr Dawson: Yes, it is. In my opening statement I made reference to the law enforcement datasets that CrimTrac were discharging, and they range from the National Police Reference System. To give effect to and optimise that and understand the scale of that, there are some 65,000 police around the country, and they have utilised that single dataset. That is only one of many within CrimTrac. The National Police Reference System had over 42 million searches in the last reporting year. We also have the Australian Firearms Information Network, the National Child Offender System, the national DNA database and the Australian fingerprints system. All those sorts of very core law enforcement datasets were not previously part of the Australian Crime Commission in terms of our capability to fully optimise that. So we are right in the middle of a proof of concept in building the National Criminal Intelligence System. This is a very important system in order to federate these searches, not only within Australia but also with some of our international partners, because if we are able to put them in a single searchable capacity—my technical people do not like me saying 'Google for cops', but that is the lay term I use—there is a much greater enhanced search engine for both frontline police officers and, importantly, investigators and intelligence analysts. Previously there was a manual system where upwards of 80 per cent of the law enforcement datasets were not searchable in a federated way. So the merger has brought the obvious benefits there by bringing them under the one roof, and it will be a process in which we will be integrating that. Certainly Executive Director Lee Walton could expand on more of the technical side of it, but that is the primary advantage in bringing the CrimTrac agency together.

Senator REYNOLDS: I would like more information on it, but in deference to time perhaps we could take that on notice.

Mr Dawson: Any specific part of that?

Senator REYNOLDS: There are a number of areas there. Given the large amount of data that you have there, obviously data integrity is very important in terms of who accesses it, if you have 65,000 police around the country having access to part or all of it. Could you provide more information to the committee about how you address privacy issues and also the access that 65,000 people have and how you regulate and control it, and also the \$14 million that you said you have for cybersecurity. Is that just to enhance the protections for this system from external attacks or access?

Mr Dawson: No, there was an amount of \$16 million over a four-year period.

Senator REYNOLDS: Sorry, \$16 million.

Mr Dawson: That covers, particularly, the criminal intelligence elements of it. The Australian Federal Police also receive an amount. The role of the ACIC is to recruit particularly high-end cyberspecialists. So, we are already populating that particular area with some 12 FTE, and there is a body of work in the years ahead to increase both our capability from hardware but also the right people who can actually provide a better picture of intelligence on those matters. And we also have some other systems that complement that.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The merger of the former CrimTrac and Australian Crime Commission (ACC) has increased productivity. It allows for the provision of the right information, to the right place, at the right time, removing data silos and reducing duplication.

The National Police Reference System (NPRS) has been assessed and accredited against the requirements of the Australian Government Information Security Manual and the Protective Security Policy Framework. States and Territories control information provisioned into NPRS based on their policy and privacy considerations. Access to NPRS is role based providing access according to a user's needs. NPRS has a secure audit repository.

NPRS is categorised for the purposes of the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002* (ACC Act) as repository of national policing information (NPI). This categorisation provides the information in those systems with significant legislative safeguards and includes criminal penalties for unauthorised disclosure.

Funding received as part of the Cyber Security Strategy is not for the enhancement and protection of ACIC systems.