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By: Australian Crime Commission / Mr Chris Dawson

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## Australian Crime Commission

### Opening Statement

- Thank you Mr Chair for the opportunity to make an opening statement.
- As the Committee may be aware, I was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Crime Commission just over one month ago, on 28 April. I am honoured by the appointment and by the opportunity which has been afforded to me to lead the Commission in its vital work to combat serious and organised crime.
- The Australian Crime Commission provides the backbone of Australia's national criminal intelligence framework. Through its Board and its mandate, the Australian Crime Commission brings together, and works collaboratively with, the states and territories and a range of Commonwealth law enforcement and regulatory bodies. In so doing, the Australian Crime Commission ensures a comprehensive understanding of, and responses to, the serious and organised crime threats of most harm to Australians and the national interest.
- In my month as CEO, I have been actively engaged in assessing the business of the Australian Crime Commission, meeting with key stakeholders, understanding challenges facing the agency and developing strategic opportunities.
- In stepping into this role, I bring with me 38 years of law enforcement experience. I have a keen appreciation of the expectations and needs that jurisdictional partners have of the Australian Crime Commission,

and how criminal intelligence underpins front line policing. I have seen firsthand how serious and organised crime impacts upon the community at all levels and I will be working hard to deliver the intelligence outcomes that are so important to our Board and partners.

- In addition to my understanding of policing imperatives, I have contributed at senior levels to important Commonwealth initiatives, including whole-of-government responses to matters such as counter-terrorism and security more generally. Serious and organised crime is a key national security risk and I will be applying my knowledge and experience of this environment to lead the ACC in discovering, understanding and responding to serious and organised crime.
- In discharging my responsibilities as CEO, I recognise that the ACC has important lawful powers. These powers are designed to meet the very real challenges to traditional methods of investigation which are posed by the resilient, complex and secretive reality of serious and organised crime. However, whilst the Commission will fully commit to confronting serious and organised crime I am also committed to open and transparent oversight. As such, I welcome the opportunity to appear before committees such as this.
- Whilst I am only a short time into my appointment, a number of key matters are evident.

#### *Relevance of the ACC*

- The work of the ACC has never been more important. Organised criminals are growing in sophistication and reach and law enforcement must keep pace. Serious and organised crime impacts Australians at every level. It affects the health and welfare of Australian communities and families. It diverts funds out of the

legitimate economy and undermines the profitability of legitimate business. It places profits under the control of criminals and out of reach of lawful government revenue.

- By way of an example, since December 2012 to date, ACC Task Force Eligo has been integral in the seizure of \$31 million in cash, the seizure of illicit drugs worth \$614 million across the nation, and the arrests of 136 people. The Task Force has achieved these results by working closely with Commonwealth, state and international law enforcement agencies to track the movement of criminal proceeds around the globe and disrupt the highest levels of organised crime impacting on Australia.
- Importantly, these outcomes have been achieved within the resource constraints with which we are presently confronted.
- The ACC continues to demonstrate that it is an agile and innovative organisation, making maximum use of its resources to deliver tangible results for the Commonwealth government, the ACC Board and the Australian community at large.

### *Funding Challenges*

- Against this backdrop, the Australian Crime Commission is contending with the realities of a constrained fiscal environment. Between 2007-08 and 2014-15 ACC appropriation funding has reduced by 12.5% due to lapsing programs, increasing savings measures and reduced revenue.
- Reduced funding and higher costs means each year going forward there will be a reduction in staffing levels under current

appropriations in the forward estimates. The Australian Crime Commission's current staffing level is 524 FTE which is well below a staffing profile of 600 FTE which the ACC has identified as the minimum workforce required to be fully effective. In 2014/15 the Australian Crime Commission's ASL will reduce further to 515 in line with the declining appropriation. By 2017-18 this number must drop to 450. In a 10 year period, this will therefore represent a 32% reduction in the ACC workforce.

- Of the 2014-15 \$91.615m revenue (appropriation \$86.916m and revenue from service provision \$4.699m) only 8.7% or around \$8m is discretionary with the remainder allocated to staffing, property and supplier expenses. This results in operational expenditure being very limited.
- This can be seen in a context of the cost to the nation of serious and organised crime runs to billions.

#### *Aging Infrastructure*

- In 2014/15 the Agency Capital Budget will be \$4.812m which is insufficient to cover adequate replenishment of the ACC's asset base which is expected to be \$40m in gross value terms. This budget also will not address funding for new systems.
- The fundamental piece of infrastructure that an intelligence agency needs is a contemporary information technology and intelligence platform. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Database is now 30 year old and needs replacing.

- Although these are the realities, the Australian Crime Commission is focused on its future and its strategic direction to discover, understand and respond to serious and organised crime.
- The Australian Crime Commission looks forward to the period ahead, and to continuing its vital work in safeguarding the national interest.

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Australian Crime Commission