DGASD's Opening Statement – Senate Estimates – 27 October 2020

In addition to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our workforce while maintaining our operations, ASD also contributed to whole of government COVID response efforts by: working with the Digital Transformation Agency on the cyber security of the COVIDSafe contact tracing app; releasing a range of cyber security advice, including advice on securing web-conferencing systems; supporting Australia's Health sector with tailored advice to prevent malicious cyber activity; and secondment of around 50 staff to assist Services Australia.

From early March 2020, opportunistic cyber criminals adapted their methods to exploit the COVID pandemic for financial gain. ASD worked with law enforcement and ISPs to block around 170 COVID-themed malicious websites; we conducted offensive cyber operations that disrupted foreign cyber criminals; and successfully completed a pilot with Services Australia and Telstra of a new capability that blocks malicious text messages before they reach Australians. We are working with other industry partners to extend this capability across the entire sector.

We also released two public reports, The Commonwealth Cyber Security Posture 2019 and an inaugural threat report with the AFP and ACIC which showed that we responded to 2,266 cyber security incidents in 2019-20, and Australian families and small businesses reported close to 60,000 cybercrimes to us, or one every 10 minutes.

The ACSC continues to provide dedicated support and technical assistance to those organisations that are being affected by malicious state-based cyber activity that the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence alerted Australians to on 19 June 2020. We are grateful for the significant response by Australians. The ACSC's website – cyber.gov.au – received more than 500,000 visits on the day of the announcement, ten times higher than the daily average; our technical advisories about how to detect and prevent this malicious activity have been viewed or downloaded more than 280,000 times; and over 1,000 new organisations have sought to join the ACSC's partnership program.

Finally, I would like to underscore my commitment to making ASD's operational activities as transparent and open as possible, while also protecting the very sensitive capabilities that enable ASD to do its job.

We are continuing with the important task of producing a book or books about ASD's history but with different contractors even though our arrangement with

the Australian National University and Professor Blaxland has ended. As part of an amicable agreement, ANU has been assigned a significant amount of Professor Blaxland's work for use as they see fit – this includes the first seven chapters of the draft history. These early chapters were mainly focused on the events prior to the establishment of ASD, including the history of cryptology.

In parallel to producing publications about our history, ASD will also establish a program of proactively declassifying our archived holdings to make publicly available as many of our important historical documents as we can, whilst ensuring classified information remains protected – only where it is absolutely necessary for us to do so.

The combination of these two initiatives will ensure that during my tenure as Director-General more information will be released about ASD and its activities than ever before.

I understand the trust placed in ASD by the Australian people and how important it is for us to go to greater lengths than ever before to explain what it is that we do, and what we have done over the preceding 73 years.

Thank you