**Senate Estimates February 2023**

**DGNI Opening Statement**

Good Evening,

Events throughout the past year have reinforced that Australia is facing some of its most complex strategic circumstances since 1942, placing increasing demands on ONI and the National Intelligence Community.

Regional stability and prosperity are being increasingly challenged amidst intensifying great-power competition. The epicentre of major-power contestation is of course our region, the Indo-Pacific, where China is driving to become the world’s leading power and the United States is looking to step up its engagement and push back. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine represents the greatest challenge to security in Europe since the height of the Cold War, but of course it too has implications for our own region. We are also seeing the impact of the West’s drawdown from the Middle East and a broader re-orientation to the Indo-Pacific. Simultaneously, trends relating to technological advances, cyber activity, transnational crime, espionage and foreign interference continue to shape the national security landscape and test our intelligence capabilities and preparedness.

Adding to this are the intense global economic challenges resulting from the impact of COVID, the diverse impacts of climate change, the invasion of Ukraine and the attendant supply chain disruption and food and energy insecurity, all of which are fuelling further destabilisation.

ONI’s role amidst this uncertainty remains helping Government make sense of the complexities, and the strategic, political and economic implications of these trends for Australia. Senior decision-makers rely on us to help them navigate uncertainty, and feedback confirms our products continue to be valued for their timely insights and frank judgments. Our Open Source function is growing rapidly and is responsible for collecting, interpreting and disseminating open source information. It works closely with our all-source assessments’ role. In parallel, ONI continues to strengthen our enterprise-level leadership, coordination and evaluation of the National Intelligence Community.

Responding to such a diverse and complex range of problems has placed a heavy onus on ONI and the broader National Intelligence Community. And here I’d like to pause to thank ONI’s staff for their hard work and dedication, rising to the challenge repeatedly over three very intense years of interpreting rapidly unfolding global events. I also want to acknowledge the hard work of the other nine agencies of the National Intelligence Community. Together we are working increasingly closely and effectively as a Community.

The Australian Government and Australian taxpayers make a substantial investment in our intelligence capabilities. And ONI is committed to meeting their legitimate expectations of us and ensuring that we continue to deliver a safe and prosperous Australia.

Pressures on the Intelligence Community may never have been greater, but I am very proud of our collective efforts in protecting and advancing our national interests in this new and complex strategic and operating environment.

Thank you.