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### Director-General of Security – Opening Statement

#### Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Budget Estimates – Monday, 28 November 2022, 0815pm – 9pm

Good evening. Thank you Chair.

Australia's security outlook remains complex, challenging and changing.

*Complex*, because the threat environment is increasingly volatile and shaped by diverse drivers that range from geopolitical to technical, ideological to environmental.

*Challenging*, because Australia is being targeted by sophisticated foreign adversaries that are effectively unconstrained by resources, ethics or laws.

*Changing*, because threats are increasingly intersecting, emerging from new places and blurring the distinctions between ASIO's legislated responsibilities.

In that context, you may be aware that earlier today I announced a change to Australia's terrorism threat level.

The threat to Australia from onshore terrorism is now assessed as POSSIBLE.

While Australia remains a potential terrorist target, there are fewer extremists with the intention to conduct an attack onshore than there were when we raised the threat level in 2014.

This does not mean the threat is extinguished. "Possible" does not mean "negligible". The threat has dissipated, not disappeared.

It remains plausible that someone will die at the hands of a terrorist in Australia within the next twelve months – although, of course, my

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Organisation will literally work around the clock to prevent that from happening.

The reduction in the threat level reflects the moderation in our counter-terrorism caseload, and also the maturity of Australia's CT frameworks, laws and resourcing.

Australia is a safer place not only because of the actions of my Organisation and our partners in law enforcement, but also because of the decisions of successive Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

However, it is important to note that our assessment assumes there are no radical shifts in these policies, processes, investments or laws. I also want to emphasise that a lower threat level does not mean a lower operational tempo.

Threat to life will remain a priority for me and my Organisation, and we will need to remain vigilant.

Terrorism is both an enduring and an evolving threat, and in some ways, our counter-terrorism mission is becoming more challenging. The most likely terrorist attack in Australia is an individual using a basic weapon like a knife or vehicle. These attacks are difficult to detect ahead of time and can occur with little to no warning.

Threat to life must and will remain a priority for my Organisation. We will stay on the case, continue our counter-terrorism effort, and give the Australian people the safety, security and assurance they deserve.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and look forward to your questions.

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