



Australian Government

Office of the Special Investigator

Opening Remarks to Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee

Supplementary Estimates, 25 October 2021

Chris Moraitis PSM, Director-General, Office of the Special Investigator

Thank you Chair.

The Office of the Special Investigator has made substantial progress since I last appeared before the Committee in May; the joint OSI-AFP investigations process is now well underway.

More than 50 investigators and intelligence analysts are now on board – almost all of them drawn from state police services and the AFP. They have all undertaken a substantial induction program and those from state jurisdictions have been sworn in as AFP special members, providing them with the necessary training and powers to undertake these complex and challenging investigations.

The investigators are benefiting significantly from advice and guidance from the Special Investigator, the Director of Investigations, and our Special Counsel team. Information has started to flow to the investigators from the Department of Defence, the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force and other sources, all following appropriate protocols and agreed procedures to protect the integrity of the investigations and any potential future prosecutions. Investigators are undertaking their work with a clear focus on progressing as expeditiously as possible.

We are conscious also of the welfare of those who are – or may become – involved in our investigations. We recognise there are other processes underway with the potential to intersect with our remit, including the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

We monitored recent events in Afghanistan with concern for the safety of all those involved and a deep appreciation for the efforts of our colleagues in various Australian Government agencies working on evacuation efforts.

To date, our work has not been markedly impeded by the situation in Afghanistan – investigation teams are primarily focused on information from a variety of other sources. We will, of course, in consultation with key partners, keep an ongoing watch and assess any implications for our investigations as they progress.

Like other workplaces, the OSI has navigated the additional challenges raised by COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, and their effect on our offices and workforce across three

jurisdictions. With careful management, this has not had a significant impact on progressing our work.

With ten teams of skilled investigators up-and-running within the joint OSI-AFP investigation model, and appropriate systems and protocols in place to support impartial and rigorous investigations and the agency as a whole, we have made significant headway in the less than ten months since we were officially established.

With these solid foundations laid, we are well placed to continue the unique and important work assigned to us by the Australian Government.

Thank you.