INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 3)

Senator the Hon David Fawcett asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 28 September 2023:

Can I go to one of the other comments in the opening statement, and I think the figure was 120 trained annually within the internal system, and I think 15 externally trained and you might want to refresh me Brigadier, how many were fully competent [BRIG D'Arcy confirmed 68% were fully competent]. In terms of competence who sets the standards for that? Given that we've had evidence from a number of witnesses that there is large gap between, for example the long course Aerospace Test training and the minimalistic levels (which witnesses described as provided internally by Defence). In the growing world of systems, cyber and space and probabilistic approaches the evidence was there are no programs within Australia. How are we categorising competence and the gap in training to address that? Who is setting those standards? Who is doing the gap analysis?

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to Senator the Hon David Fawcett's question:

Defence released its Test and Evaluation (T&E) Strategy in 2021 and commenced implementation over three phases or 'Horizons'. During this time, Defence has established a deep understanding of the T&E enterprise and the changes necessary to best serve contemporary warfighting capability needs. In Horizon 1, Defence conducted a workforce study to identify T&E competency gaps which considered both Defence and defence-related industry requirements. Based on projected T&E demands across all Defence domains, the study concluded that the most significant gaps to be addressed were in the areas of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Robotics, Autonomous Systems and Artificial Intelligence (RAS-AI).

The Defence T&E competency framework established in 2019 defined levels of T&E competency and mapped them to existing courses and academic standards, but did not differentiate between domains. Under Horizon 2 of the Strategy, Defence will establish a catalogue of internal and external courses and experience requirements to cover the competency levels across each domain. Work to date has identified courses are available in autonomous systems and cyber-worthiness but more work is needed to populate the full T&E training spectrum. Where existing training opportunities are not available, Defence will engage across the T&E enterprise to address the gaps.