

Review of Administration and Expenditure No.15 (2015-2016)



Australian Government

Office of National Assessments

**Submission to the
Parliamentary Joint Committee
on Intelligence and Security**

**Review of Administration
and Expenditure No.15**

**Financial year 2015-2016
Unclassified Summary**

December 2016

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Unclassified Summary of ONA PJCIS Report for Financial Year 2015/16

Introduction

The Office of National Assessments (ONA) concerns itself exclusively with international political, strategic and economic issues of importance to Australia. ONA is a statutory body that reports directly to the Prime Minister. ONA is independent of any department or authority and the Director-General of ONA is not subject to external direction on the content of assessments.

ONA was established under the *Office of National Assessments Act 1977 (ONA Act)* and began operations on 20 February 1978.

ONA's Director-General attends meetings of the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC), and is a standing member of the Secretaries Committee on National Security (SCNS) and the National Intelligence Coordination Committee (NICC).

The *ONA Act* sets out three primary functions for the office:

- reporting and assessment on matters of political, strategic and economic significance to Australia
- coordination of Australia's foreign intelligence activities, and
- evaluation of Australia's foreign intelligence activities.

External accountability

A detailed legislative framework defines and regulates Australian intelligence community (AIC) powers, and provides three pillars of oversight for ONA: Ministers; Parliament; and the independent Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS).

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

The Director-General appeared before the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) on 2 May 2016 to discuss ONA's submission, Review of Administration and Expenditure No. 14 (provided to the Committee in late 2015), which reported on activities undertaken in the 2014/15 financial year.

Senate Committee for Finance and Public Administration

The Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee has coverage of the PM&C portfolio for the regular hearings into Budget Estimates. ONA was not called to appear before the Committee in the reporting period.

ONA responded to 69 written Questions on Notice over the reporting period.

Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security

The *Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security Act 1986 (IGIS Act)* provides the Inspector-General with the authority to conduct enquiries and inspections with respect to a wide range of ONA's operations.

IGIS conducted two routine reviews of ONA's application of the privacy guidelines during this reporting period.

Public interest disclosure (PID)

The IGIS oversees the operation of the PID scheme in ONA. In accordance with requirements set out in *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (PID Act)* ONA participated in the IGIS annual survey addressing PID operations for the reporting period. In our response to the IGIS survey, we reported that there had been no PID cases or PID investigations undertaken during the 2015/16 period.

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Legislative changes affecting ONA administration

There were no legislative changes that affected the administration of ONA during the 2015/16 year.

Determination made under Section 105D of the PGPA Act

Under a determination made under Section 105D of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act (PGPA Act)*, ONA's Annual Report is not tabled in Parliament. Under this same determination, the ONA Annual Report and Corporate Plan are not published.

The Annual Report is submitted to the Prime Minister and IGIS and made available to other Ministers as required.

The Corporate Plan is submitted to the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister.

Assessments

In preparing assessments, ONA draws on a wide range of source material – classified intelligence, diplomatic cables and the great store of knowledge and information available globally through open sources, including that collected and assessed by ONA's Open Source Centre – and government and non-government expertise. ONA is independent in that it is separate from and not subject to the influences or preferences of policy makers.

Budget

The operations of ONA are funded through departmental annual appropriations. Total annual appropriation received in 2015/16 was \$30.273 million. In addition, Departmental Capital Budget (DCB) of \$3.928 million was also received. ONA prepares annual financial statements in accordance with provisions outlined in the *PGPA Act*. The ANAO scrutinises the ONA's accounts and audits our financial statements. ONA's accounts were issued an unqualified audit report by the ANAO again this year.

As part of the 2014/15 Budget the government announced a measure providing relief to ONA from the ongoing efficiency dividends.

People management

The people of ONA are our most important asset. We rely on their expertise and skills to maintain the efficacy and reputation of our analysis, open source collection, coordination role and corporate services. Effective workforce planning, selection and employment screening, focused learning and development and a tailored performance management system provide crucial support to our people.

This reporting period we focused on:

- fostering an inclusive culture through workplace diversity initiatives, including the launch of a comprehensive Diversity Action Plan, unconscious bias training for all staff, and the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan
- enhancing our workforce planning capabilities with the establishment of a Workforce Planning Committee
- successful transition to the Treasury payroll system under the Shared and Common Services Programme (SCSP)
- inauguration of our e-Recruit system
- implementation of the ONA Enterprise Agreement 2016-19 (EA) which came into effect on 4 May 2016, and
- actioning initiatives of our Learning and Development Strategy, including on-line learning and selection panel training.

Security

ONA applies robust and effective security arrangements and maintained compliance with the Protective Security Policy Framework requirements.