

Training

Background

- 3.1 The Flood Report noted that it is crucial that agencies follow good recruitment strategies with early training and ongoing professional development:

Intelligence agencies need to invest in their staff, both through formal training and by providing them with opportunities to expand and update their knowledge, perspectives and tradecraft, in Australia and overseas. Increasingly also, Australia's intelligence professionals require dedicated training to build the special set of skills needed to collect against and assess non-traditional security threats such as terrorism.¹

- 3.2 The Committee heard from the agencies that with rapid expansion of staff numbers has come the need for increased and improved staff training.
- 3.3 To this end, most agencies have increased their training budgets substantially in the last two to three years to meet their needs. The training budget of one agency has increased almost seven-fold in the last two years. Agencies spend varying amounts on training, and the Committee found that language training is among the most expensive training.

¹ Flood, P. 'Report of the Inquiry into Australian Intelligence Agencies', Australian Government, July 2004, p.154.

Training Strategies

3.4 Agencies are reviewing and refining training to keep it up-to-date and appropriate to the work of the agency. In some cases, agencies have been working with other government departments to 'frame training correctly'², for example with the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Public Prosecutions or the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security.

3.5 Across the AIC agencies, typical training courses include:

- Induction training;
- Graduate training;
- Analyst training;
- Intelligence officer traineeship programs;
- Non-intelligence officer staff training;
- Corporate staff training;
- Ethics and Accountability training;
- Management and leadership development;
- Strategic studies;
- IT training; and
- Coaching and mentoring programs.

3.6 Some agencies are using 'outside' help to develop appropriate training. The Director General of one agency told the Committee he has tasked an external auditor to review the agency's training programs. The review will include looking at how the agency can encourage staff to retain language skills.

3.7 The Committee heard about a variety of strategies being devised to make staff training programs more appropriate to the needs of the various agencies, including:

- Broadening the focus of training to include leadership and management training across the organisation;
- Developing a much more holistic view of staff development;

- Creating a Directorate of Tradecraft Training and Development specifically to develop a through-career training structure. The initial focus of the Directorate has been to review basic level training requirements;
- Trialling training programs delivered by a US-based intelligence college to improve the performance of staff members particularly in relation to producing good analysis by drawing on sources effectively, integrating open source with secret reporting, and conveying messages and arguments clearly; and
- Devising a program to engage analysts with think tanks and prominent academics and people in other fields around the country to prevent isolation and to challenge staff views.

Training Linguists

- 3.8 In the Budget Speech delivered on 10 May 2005, the Treasurer noted the need for improved and increased language skills in intelligence agencies. To achieve this improvement, the Treasurer committed \$239 million:
- ... to strengthen Australia's intelligence capabilities, in areas such as counter-terrorism investigations and language skills development.³
- 3.9 Only one AIC agency has no involvement in staff language training. The other agencies are involved in some degree of language training for staff and for three of the agencies this is a costly and important part of their staff development.
- 3.10 The Committee heard that requirements for language skills have changed over recent years, for example, one of the agencies which traditionally trained staff in language skills only for overseas postings now also trains staff for use of language in Australia. Another agency which formerly had language requirements focussed on the Asia Pacific region now finds it needs to develop more language depth in languages from other regions.
- 3.11 Generally speaking, agencies provide staff with one or more of three types of language training:
- Acquisition training;
 - Maintenance training; and
 - In-country training.

3 'Budget Strategy and Outlook 2005-06. Budget paper No.1' Commonwealth of Australia.

- 3.12 The DFAT Language Studies Unit and the Department of Defence School of Languages are both used extensively by the AIC agencies for acquisition and maintenance language training – although the Committee heard that at least one agency which previously relied heavily on the Department of Defence School of Languages is increasingly finding that the school does not meet its new requirements for linguists.
- 3.13 At the time of the Committee’s enquiry, the Defence Department was conducting a broad review of its language training and capability. The review was examining all aspects of the delivery of language training for Defence (military and civilian, including its intelligence and security agencies). Recommendations from the review will be passed to the Chief of Services Committee in Defence in the middle of 2006. Any improvements to the way in which language training is broadly conducted within Defence could be expected to have a positive flow-on affect for the Defence intelligence agencies.
- 3.14 Most agencies are devising strategies to encourage staff to gain, update and maintain language capability and, to this end, most have implemented or increased staff language allowances.
- 3.15 The Committee heard that, generally speaking, university language courses do not prepare graduates to the level required by AIC agencies. One agency has recently started working with universities to identify potential linguists early in their university studies to enable the agency to supplement their training and language development. Another agency sends university language graduates to the ADF language school intensive language programs and may also supplement this training with some in-country language experience.
- 3.16 In-country language training is expensive. A 40-46 week in-country course will cost approximately \$100,000 per person. A pro-rata figure could be applied to the shorter language training courses of 5-22 weeks.
- 3.17 At least one agency is investigating if it would be more economical to send staff to universities in other countries for language training rather than maintaining the infrastructure to train small numbers of staff in Australia.
- 3.18 The main challenges associated with training linguists were summed up as:
- The time commitment required;
 - The cost of training to the appropriate level of proficiency; and
 - The time taken to source new linguist training programs.

- 3.19 The ADA argued that when the ADF School of Languages cut down on the length of some courses and the number and frequency of residential refresher and re-qualification courses for financial reasons in the 1990s, this led to a discernible decline in the standards of initial training, a marked decline in re-qualification rates and broader difficulties for individuals in maintaining their language skills over the longer term. All these factors detrimentally affected retention rates and proved that maintaining pools of linguists requires long-term vision and sufficient and sustained investment.

The Defence School of Languages in Melbourne

- 3.20 The Committee heard from one agency that it would like to see the ADF School of Languages moved from Melbourne to Canberra as there are many potential language students in Canberra who are not prepared to go to Melbourne for training. The agency told the Committee that it awaits the abovementioned Defence review of language training to see if relocation of the school is recommended.
- 3.21 However, at least two other agencies would not like to see the relocation of the school. The Committee heard from these agencies that the school is a success precisely because it draws on the extensive pool of language teaching talent in Melbourne and also with many ethnic communities in Melbourne, students have ample opportunity to mix in those communities and be exposed to the language.
- 3.22 In its submission, the ADA spoke strongly in defence of the ADF School of Languages remaining in Melbourne both because there is a ready supply of native speakers of most languages for employment as instructors at the school and also because the ADF believes there are significant security advantages in locating the school away from Canberra 'even if only to complicate the attentions of foreign intelligence agencies'.⁴
- 3.23 The Committee agrees that the ADF School of Languages is a valuable national asset and that it should remain in Melbourne.

4 ADA Submission, p.14.

Mentoring Trainees

- 3.24 It has been suggested in the press that ‘unless new recruits can be trained and mentored by people with operational experience against hard intelligence targets’ additional recruiting will make little impact.⁵
- 3.25 Several of the agencies addressed mentoring either in their submissions or during evidence given at the hearings. Agencies told the Committee that they are aware that their recruitment efforts must be backed up by appropriate, timely and excellent training and mentoring. However, on-the-job mentoring can place heavy demands on senior officers who may be required to both manage and mentor staff, especially with rapid expansion of staff numbers. The Committee heard that rapid growth is placing a burden on existing staff who are taking on a significant extra load as on-the-job trainers and mentors.
- 3.26 Agencies told the Committee that while new recruits may bring a lot of talent to the organisation, they are usually inexperienced and are not operationally ready. They need very close supervision in the early stages of their employment.
- 3.27 Agencies have devised various strategies, both formal and less formal, to ensure that recruits receive adequate mentoring without placing undue burdens on senior officers. For example, in 2005, one of the agencies established a coaching and mentoring program through specialist external training providers. To date four participants have completed the program and five are due to commence this financial year. Expenditure is approximately \$3,500 per person. It is anticipated that this program will result in the further development of organisational capability and will support a succession planning program.
- 3.28 Another organisation has, during the last year, been investing in middle management development in order to have people who can mentor, train and coach new staff.

Combined AIC Training

- 3.29 The Flood Report recommended that ONA’s staff be increased to provide improved foreign intelligence coordination and evaluation. To this end, ONA established the Foreign Intelligence Coordination Committee (FICC). One of the roles of the FICC is to set-up some combined AIC training. The Flood Report proposed that, among other roles, the FICC would:

5 Williams, C. ‘Australia slow off the mark on terrorism’, *Canberra Times*, 18 October 2005.

Play a role in *identifying and developing strategies to address cross-cutting training needs*, building on discussions already under way among agency heads. Common training would help provide a foundation for whole-of-government approaches to intelligence needs and improve employment mobility around the community.⁶

- 3.30 The Flood Report suggested that the FICC's joint courses would supplement, rather than replace, training developed by individual agencies to meet agency-specific requirements. There are several courses currently available for AIC staff, including:
- An AIC-wide induction course
 - A three-day AIC Orientation Course for new intelligence officers run monthly (commenced in May 2005);
 - A seven-day terrorism course which is run four times a year by one of the larger agencies for their own and other AIC staff; and
 - A five-day introduction to Islam which is run five times a year by one of the larger agencies for their own and other AIC staff.
- 3.31 The Committee heard that a course for AIC staff at senior levels is currently being developed to focus on strategic issues facing the AIC.
- 3.32 The Australian Defence Association supports more integrated AIC training. Its submission drew on the combined knowledge and experience of its members to recommend that 'basic intelligence training should be undertaken on more of a joint basis'. This would include more inter-agency secondments and more inter-agency training and professional development.
- 3.33 The Committee notes that, taking the concept of combined-AIC training run by the FICC a little further, a case has been made in an academic journal for the creation of an Intelligence College⁷ which, it is suggested, would be an 'enormously important start' towards fixing the intelligence and security agencies' current training difficulties.
- 3.34 An Intelligence College would 'need resources sufficient to run community-wide training for around a hundred or more recruits every year. It would need to offer a range of programmes designed to deepen

6 Flood, P. 'Report of the Inquiry into Australian Intelligence Agencies', Australian Government, July 2004, p.154.

7 Jennings, P. 'Unfinished Business. Reforming our Intelligence Agencies' *Policy*, Volume 20 No.4, Summer 2004-05.

skills as people become more experienced and to provide a means for collectors and analysts to understand the vital roles each play.’⁸

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Government enquire into the feasibility of establishing a combined facility for basic training in intelligence either in an existing academic institution or as a separate college.

Inter-Agency Movement

- 3.35 The Committee heard from one agency Head that he has been putting considerable effort into encouraging ‘a lot more secondments of [his] officers out of [the agency]’⁹ as a form of cross-AIC training. The Committee was told that the work of agency officers is increasingly being carried out in a political context and if officers stay only within one agency they will become ‘quite narrow’ professionally. Secondments within AIC agencies will develop and broaden the skill base of all officers and the contribution they make will be that much greater.
- 3.36 Some agencies use secondments and personnel exchanges with other agencies in Australia and overseas to provide additional professional development opportunities. The Committee heard that this reflects the longstanding partnership and cooperation that exists between AIC agencies and international partners. At least one agency currently has officers from all the other AIC agencies on secondment in the agency.
- 3.37 Another agency uses secondment from other agencies as an important workforce planning strategy and currently has staff on secondment from several AIC agencies (as well as other government departments).

Conclusion

- 3.38 The Committee is satisfied that all the agencies are tackling the need for increased and improved training of staff as a result of undergoing rapid expansion and in order to retain a highly skilled and well-functioning workforce. One agency is not expanding in size but, nevertheless, it continues to need to recruit significant numbers and, therefore, it is as

8 Ibid.

9 Private Hearing transcript.

involved as any other agency in implementing strategies to develop and deliver appropriate training.

- 3.39 The Committee heard that, while there is scope to combine some AIC training, there is also a need for agencies to continue to develop and deliver training specifically targeted to the needs of their own staff.
- 3.40 Language training remains one of the most difficult and expensive areas of training for AIC agencies and the agencies demonstrated that various initiatives are being devised to lessen and, it is hoped, eventually overcome these difficulties.
- 3.41 The Committee notes that agencies are also devising and implementing strategies to ensure that new recruits receive appropriate mentoring even though mentoring can place heavy demands on senior officers, especially with rapid expansion of staff numbers.
- 3.42 The Committee is fully satisfied that agencies are making a substantial effort to review, develop and refine their training to keep it up-to-date and appropriate to the work of the agency in order to create a highly skilled workforce.

