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**The analytic independence and integrity of assessments  
made by the Defence Intelligence Organisation**

**Inquiry 2017**

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Honourable Margaret Stone  
Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security

8 September 2017

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## 1. Summary and recommendations

1.1 The Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO) is an all-source intelligence assessment agency within the Department of Defence. Its assessments support the functions of the Minister for Defence, the Department of Defence and the Australian Defence Force (ADF). DIO reports of its assessments play an important role in critical decision making and must reflect a high standard of analytic integrity and independence.

1.2 In November 2016 this office initiated an inquiry into the analytic independence and integrity of the assessments made by DIO. This is the third such inquiry in respect of DIO, with similar inquiries completed in 2008 and 2013. It is a routine inquiry, not prompted by any particular concern. As with the earlier inquiries, the inquiry does not address either the accuracy of DIO's assessments, or the extent to which they meet the needs of Ministers, the Department or the ADF as such issues are beyond the jurisdiction of this office. For this reason the inquiry concentrated on a review of a sample of twenty-one DIO reports of its assessments as well as a review of DIO policy and meetings with relevant DIO staff. The inquiry identified nine aspects of the report production process that contribute to the independence and integrity of DIO reports and assessments. They are:

- Initiating and scoping DIO reports
- Consultation and clearance
- Relations with other government agencies
- Training
- Language and style
- Information usage and identification of sources
- Critical review of past judgments
- DIO unpublished product
- Recordkeeping

1.3 This inquiry found no evidence of interference with the independence of DIO assessments. Generally the analytical integrity of the DIO process for producing reports is sound, though some areas for continuing improvement are highlighted in this inquiry. DIO's records of consultation and approval of draft reports have improved since the previous inquiry. Training observed during the inquiry was delivered professionally and appears to meet DIO requirements. As well DIO takes a flexible approach to meeting its analysts' needs for additional "trade-craft" training. The consistent and thorough editorial review of reports prior to publication resulted in clear language and style. The process for reviewing past judgments appears to be working well.

1.4 The review of information usage and sourcing in the sampled reports yielded mixed results. Two of the 21 sample reports did not require sourcing. Of the 19 that were considered, nine were well or excellently sourced; in six the content was not always adequately supported by the sourcing; and, in four reports there was either no referencing or they were poorly referenced. The inquiry recognises that the extent of referencing that is appropriate for a product will depend on the topic, the purpose and the timeframe within which it was produced.

1.5 The policy that governs DIO information usage and sourcing requires updating to take into account changed work practices within DIO as well as the findings of this inquiry. Since

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the previous inquiry DIO has improved its recordkeeping, though there remains room to improve the maintenance of key documentation in DIO's official records management repository.

1.6 This inquiry makes the following recommendations, in addition to several other suggestions for improvement. DIO has accepted the recommendations and will report to IGIS on its progress in implementing the recommendation within six months of receiving this report. DIO is also working to address the suggestions for improvement contained in the inquiry.

### ***Recommendation 1***

DIO should continue its work to improve the quality and quantity of references included in analytical reports, and in particular should improve the consistency of endnoting and recordkeeping, by updating its endnoting and sourcing policy as soon as reasonably practicable.

### ***Recommendation 2***

DIO should ensure that its records identify the approving officer for each report, and should record that officer's status if relevant for approval. If approval requirements are changed a record should be kept of the reasons for the change.

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