

## INQUIRY INTO ORGANISATIONAL SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT PROCESSES IN DEFENCE

### Executive Summary

- This formal inquiry (conducted pursuant to section 8 of the *Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security Act 1986*) examined the existing Organisational Suitability Assessment (OSA) policies, procedures and practices in the three Defence intelligence agencies – DIGO, DIO and DSD.
- The inquiry included:
  - examination of relevant policy and procedures documentation
  - interviews with a cross-section of employees and key staff
  - consultation with Deputy Secretary of Intelligence, Security and International Policy and Defence intelligence agency heads, and
  - expert examination of the psychometric instruments used and clinical assessments made by Defence intelligence psychologists.
- The general picture of the management of OSA policies and procedures within the Defence intelligence agencies is a positive one, although there are a number of important changes required to enhance decision-making and the reliability and validity of assessments, and to ensure that some procedural aspects align fully with the legal and policy framework
- The OSA was implemented as a tool for improving personnel security on the basis of a recommendation by Mr WJ Blick PSM AM in early 2000 following his investigation of the activities of a former DIO officer, Mr Jean-Philippe Wispelaere who was convicted in the United States on espionage-related offences.
- It has since evolved to serve two separate purposes – security suitability and organisational ‘fit’. The first of these purposes is seeking to ascertain if a prospective or existing employee poses a threat to security. The second purpose is to assess whether the person’s attributes or skills are such that they can be expected to perform in a particular role or part of the organisation.
- The blending of these purposes has the risk that neither purpose may be realised as fully as is possible, and certainly creates several procedural issues. A separation of, or at the least a clear delineation between, the security suitability and ‘fit’ aspects of the OSA is required.
- This will facilitate procedural improvements including in the areas of informed consent, provision of feedback, maintaining appropriate privacy and confidentiality, portability of assessments and information sharing more generally. Importantly, it will also facilitate decision-making, validation and research.
- There are three distinct elements of the OSA – a battery of psychometric tests, a follow-up interview with a clinical psychologist and an assessment report. In general, these elements provide for a valid and reliable assessment of the potential security threat posed by an individual. However, both reliability and validity will be improved through the development of more rigorous quality assurance measures identifying explicit linkages between the various psychometric tests used, the factors being assessed, and greater structuring of clinical interviews.
- Where members of the ADF are posted to the Defence intelligence agencies it is important to ensure that the requirements of the OSA are satisfied prior to the issuing of a posting order. In addition to being an important efficiency measure for the department as a whole it is also an important strategy for ensuring that the OSA does not negatively affect the personal circumstances of the military member.

- Emphasis should be given to portability – within the AIC – of security suitability assessments and exchange of information regarding serial applicants.
- Resources should also be directed to a structured research program and validation studies. Also important is the refinement of the benchmarking and measurement strategies, including the collection of statistical data.