



“ We are ***driven by*** values
of ***respect, integrity***
and ***innovation*** ”

Section 1

Agency overview

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Chief Executive Officer's review

In 2020–21, my focus has been on delivering on our strategic priorities—to be the criminal intelligence partner of choice, to provide comprehensive policing information to our partners, to keep the community safe, and to deliver a sustainable agency into the future.

Despite challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic over the last 12 months and more, we have continued to deliver our work and made a real and meaningful contribution to the COVID-19 response. We know that change is constant, and our staff have proven that we have a resilient workforce who adapt well and continue to achieve our purpose: to protect Australia from criminal threats through coordinating a strategic response and collecting, assessing and disseminating intelligence and policing information.

Our organisation

In the last 12 months, we have undertaken a significant change to our organisational structure to ensure that we continue to be the agency of choice when it comes to criminal intelligence. We have created 2 new Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions that focus on the core components of the ACIC's activities—intelligence, and the delivery of our corporate functions, including the operation of the national criminal history checking function.

In the Intelligence Group, we have created an Examinations Branch to ensure that our unique coercive powers are at the centre of the agency's operational effort, and moved to a north–south operations model to support our operations to have a coordinated national focus on delivering impact and national insights into the transnational serious and organised crime threats Australia faces.

We have also merged the Intelligence Operations and Capability Divisions to leverage our unique capabilities to drive intelligence insights and improve the flow of intelligence from collection through assessment to dissemination.

Our staff are our biggest asset, and we continue to provide training opportunities to ensure that our workforce has the knowledge to effectively tackle the complexity of transnational serious and organised crime. This includes the Core Criminal Intelligence Training Pathway; the National Advanced Strategic Intelligence Course—a joint initiative with Charles Sturt University, open to staff from Australian law enforcement agencies; and our 2 leadership development programs aimed at current and emerging leaders.

National Criminal Intelligence System

In March 2021, in line with our provision of comprehensive policing information, the National Criminal Intelligence System (NCIS) Operational Exposure Release occurred, making NCIS available to law enforcement partners to use in active operations for the first time. NCIS aims to securely connect law enforcement and intelligence agencies to share information nationally in a targeted, timely and relevant way.

We will continue to work collaboratively with the Department of Home Affairs and our partners involved in the design and delivery of NCIS to ensure that we provide a positive experience for all users of the NCIS capability, presenting information that is relevant and informative and meets the needs of all law enforcement users as they are onboarded during 2021–22.

Priority targets

The Australian Priority Organisation Target (APOT) list details the top international and transnational targets that play a significant role within Australia's serious and organised crime environment. We continue to coordinate operational activities with Australian and international partner agencies to cause maximum global and local disruption of APOT networks.

Over the past year, the APOT strategy continued to see significant levels of cooperation between law enforcement and offshore partners. This led to the disruption of 3 APOT networks to the point that they are no longer considered APOT-level threats. Elements of a further 9 APOT networks were significantly disrupted, decreasing the overall threat of the criminal organisation.

IT improvements

In 2020–21, our National Police Information Services Team successfully completed two major projects and several key business-as-usual tasks. We delivered the National Child Offender System and completed the Australian Firearms Information Network (AFIN) integration project. The AFIN integration means that all partner agencies are now providing firearms data directly into AFIN and allows national access to detailed, historical and near-real time, cross-jurisdictional firearms information to improve safety.

The National Criminal Investigation DNA Database—Integrated Forensic Analysis capability was also upgraded, enabling all state and territory law enforcement agencies to use crime scene evidence to perform familial searches against the national DNA dataset stored in the National Criminal Investigation DNA Database.

We are also supporting IT investment in our critical intelligence capabilities to ensure that we are able to deliver on our core function of delivering timely and targeted strategic intelligence products to inform government and support broader law enforcement operations.

Looking forward

The ACIC continually works with government to ensure that the agency is appropriately funded to fulfil its role as Australia's national criminal intelligence agency.

While the world continues to be challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, those involved in serious and organised crime are forced to adapt quickly. And so are we.

We have continued, and we will continue, to target those criminals, share timely and relevant intelligence and information with our partners, and focus our efforts on making Australia hostile to criminal exploitation.



Michael Phelan APM
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission



About us

We are Australia's national criminal intelligence agency, with investigative and information delivery functions. Our purpose is to protect Australia from criminal threats through coordinating a strategic response and collecting, assessing and disseminating intelligence and policing information.

Role

Our role includes reducing the serious and organised crime threats of most harm to Australians and the national interest, and providing national policing information systems and services, to achieve our vision of an Australia hostile to criminal exploitation.

We work closely with our Australian and international partners to:

- ▶ collect, correlate, analyse and disseminate criminal information and intelligence
- ▶ maintain a national database of criminal information and intelligence
- ▶ provide and maintain national information capabilities and services to support policing and law enforcement
- ▶ provide strategic criminal intelligence assessments and advice on national criminal intelligence priorities
- ▶ conduct investigations and intelligence operations into federally relevant criminal activity
- ▶ provide nationally coordinated criminal history checks.

We are the conduit for sharing criminal information and intelligence between all state, territory and Commonwealth law enforcement agencies.

Objectives

Our strategic direction and corporate plan for are framed around 4 key objectives.

Be the criminal intelligence partner of choice

- ▶ Maximise use of our coercive powers and other intelligence collection capabilities to deliver leading insightful intelligence products
- ▶ Maintain strategic focus on priority crime themes while delivering perceptive intelligence assessments into new and emerging issues
- ▶ Leverage our unique role to coordinate the response to the highest priority transnational serious and organised crime threats
- ▶ Drive innovative targeting strategies such as the APOT strategy

Provide comprehensive Commonwealth and policing information

- ▶ Deliver the NCIS capability to provide the first truly national and unified picture of criminal activities
- ▶ Ensure that current national policing information systems are positioned to transition into the NCIS capability to allow access to information through a single interface
- ▶ Deliver national policing information systems that meet stakeholder needs and are accessible, reliable, secure and trusted

Keep the community safe

- ▶ Deliver world-class background checking services to support employment or entitlement decisions
- ▶ Invest in the National Police Checking Service (NPCS) to transform its operations to support future activities
- ▶ Ensure that the NPCS complements commercial services to maximise its value

Deliver a sustainable agency

- ▶ The ACIC is funded to continue to deliver capabilities that meet board-agreed priorities
- ▶ Modernise the Australian Crime Commission Act to ensure that the right powers are available to respond to new and emerging criminal threats
- ▶ Align corporate services to deliver strategic priorities
- ▶ Leverage whole-of-government opportunities to maximise capability

Specialist capabilities

The capabilities that enable us to perform our functions include:

- ▶ **National criminal intelligence data holdings**—We collect criminal intelligence and combine it with information and intelligence from partner agencies to create and share a comprehensive national picture of criminality in Australia.
- ▶ **National information and intelligence sharing services and systems**—We provide timely and reliable police and law enforcement information services and, through consultation and collaboration, we develop new and innovative capabilities.
- ▶ **Coercive powers**—We have coercive powers, similar to those of a royal commission, which may be exercised by an ACIC examiner in the course of a special ACIC operation or special ACIC investigation.
- ▶ **International collaboration**—We work in collaboration with international networks and have deployed ACIC officers to countries of strategic importance in our efforts to counteract serious and organised crime impacting Australia.

- ▶ **Strategic products**—Our strategic intelligence products build a comprehensive picture of criminality in Australia to support our partners in decision-making, strategic targeting and policy development.
- ▶ **National target management framework**—Our national target management framework guides law enforcement in establishing and sharing organised crime priorities and targets. This framework and our APOT list support nationally coordinated operational strategies for dealing with multijurisdictional and transnational serious and organised crime investigations.
- ▶ **Legislative framework allowing appropriate data sharing**—By sharing intelligence, information, resources and expertise with our partners, and with private industry where permitted and appropriate, we maximise the collective impact against crime. We are a conduit between the states and territories and the Commonwealth for the sharing of criminal information and intelligence.
- ▶ **Specialist technology and skills**—Our work is underpinned by sophisticated and tailored intelligence gathering and analytical capabilities.

Culture and values

We promote a culture that strives for excellence, enables personal and professional growth, values workplace diversity, models respectful behaviour, and achieves agency unity through collaboration and inclusiveness.

We value our professionally diverse people as our greatest asset. We engage with each other and our stakeholders ethically, and with integrity and respect. We are capable, agile, innovative, adaptable and service focused.

We are committed to the Australian Public Service values of being impartial, committed to service, accountable, respectful and ethical.

We uphold our 5 guiding principles:

- ▶ Driven by values of respect, integrity and innovation
- ▶ Always in partnership
- ▶ Accurate, timely and reliable data and information
- ▶ Use superior tradecraft
- ▶ Highly trained and skilled staff.

Our organisation

The ACIC is a Commonwealth statutory agency, established under the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002* (ACC Act) with roles and functions underpinned by supporting legislation in each state and territory. We began operating on 1 July 2016.

The ACIC is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity within the Home Affairs portfolio, in which the Department of Home Affairs is the central policy department. We are one of 5 statutory agencies in the portfolio and report to the Minister for Home Affairs.

Structure

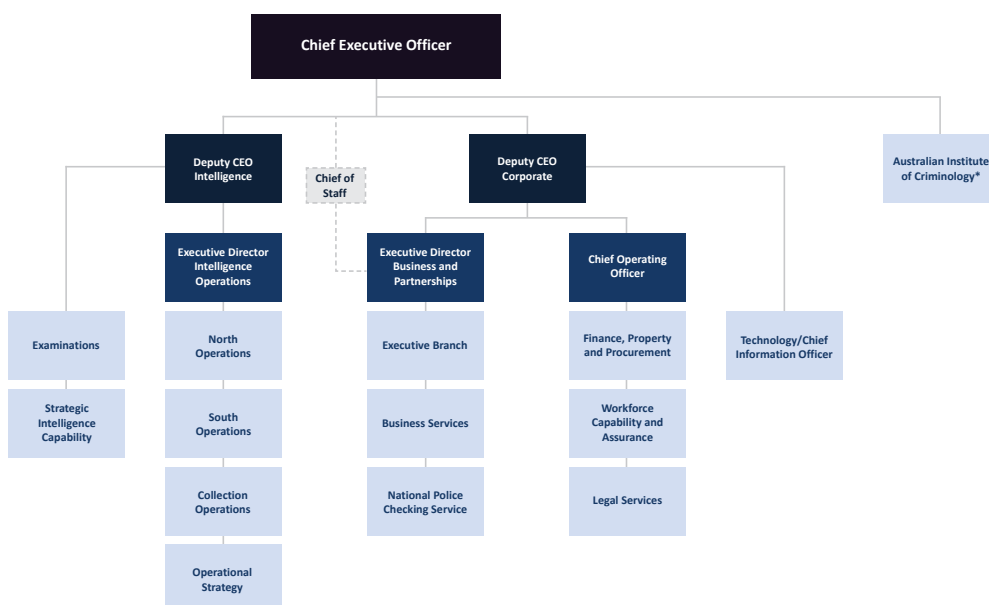
Figure 1.1 sets out the organisational structure of the ACIC.

During 2020–21, the structure was revised to focus on the two core components of our activities – intelligence operations and corporate functions. In particular:

- ▶ The position of Deputy CEO Intelligence was created, and our intelligence and capability functions were realigned to leverage our unique capabilities to drive intelligence insights, and to improve the flow of intelligence from collection through assessment to dissemination.
- ▶ The positions of Deputy CEO Corporate and Executive Director Business and Partnerships were created, and our corporate functions were adjusted to strengthen our strategic engagement with partners and our delivery of national policing information services and background checks.

Together, the changes help to ensure that our core activities are performed efficiently and effectively, with a strong emphasis on accountability, to meet our key objectives.

Figure 1.1: Organisational structure at 30 June 2021



* The ACIC Chief Executive Officer is also Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Board

The ACIC Board is established by section 7B of the ACC Act 2020–21. Its members are senior officeholders of Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement bodies and key regulatory and national security agencies.

The role of the board includes:

- ▶ providing strategic direction and determining agency priorities
- ▶ determining national criminal intelligence priorities
- ▶ authorising, by determination, special ACIC investigations and special ACIC operations, which allow the use of our coercive powers, to occur
- ▶ making recommendations about charges for national policing information services, and providing recommendations to the Minister for investment to improve, maintain and expand these information systems and services.

As a powerful law enforcement and national security body, the board provides a significant platform to drive the collegial approach necessary to make Australia better connected, informed and capable of responding to crime.

Examiners

ACIC examiners are independent statutory officers appointed by the Governor-General to exercise the coercive powers set out in the ACC Act for the purpose of board-approved special ACIC operations and special ACIC investigations.

An examiner may exercise coercive powers only where relevant to a special ACIC operation or special ACIC investigation and when all legislative requirements are met and the examiner is satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to exercise those special statutory powers.

The ACIC currently has one full-time examiner and 2 part-time examiners, all of whom have extensive experience in the legal profession. The appointment of a further 3 full-time examiners is expected to occur in late 2021.

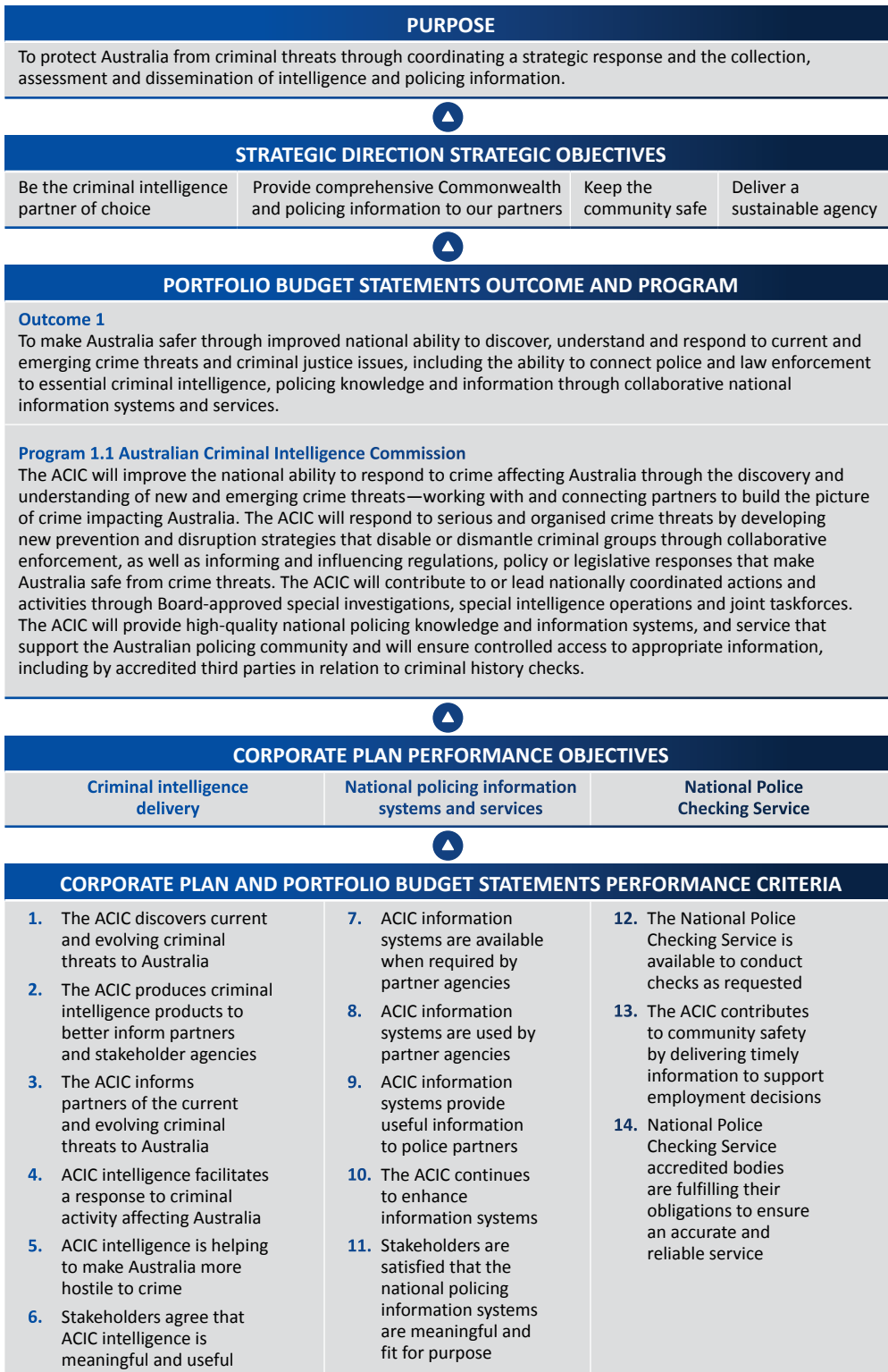
Relationship with the Australian Institute of Criminology

The ACIC supports and closely collaborates with the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), to ensure that criminological research and evidence remain central to law enforcement's collective response to crime. Our CEO is also Director of the AIC and the 2 agencies are co-located. While the AIC operates independently, its high-quality research is important to our work.

Our outcome

Our annual portfolio budget statements detail our outcome and program structure. Within that framework, the 'outcome' is the intended result, impact or consequence of our actions. We work towards our outcome through the activities that make up our program.

Our outcome and program structure 2020–21 is shown in Figure 1.2, along with its relationship to our *Strategic Direction Statement* and *Corporate Plan 2020–21*. Those documents and a link to our *Portfolio Budget Statements 2020–21* are on our website at <www.acic.gov.au/publications/corporate-documents>.

Figure 1.2: Portfolio, corporate and strategic performance framework 2020–21

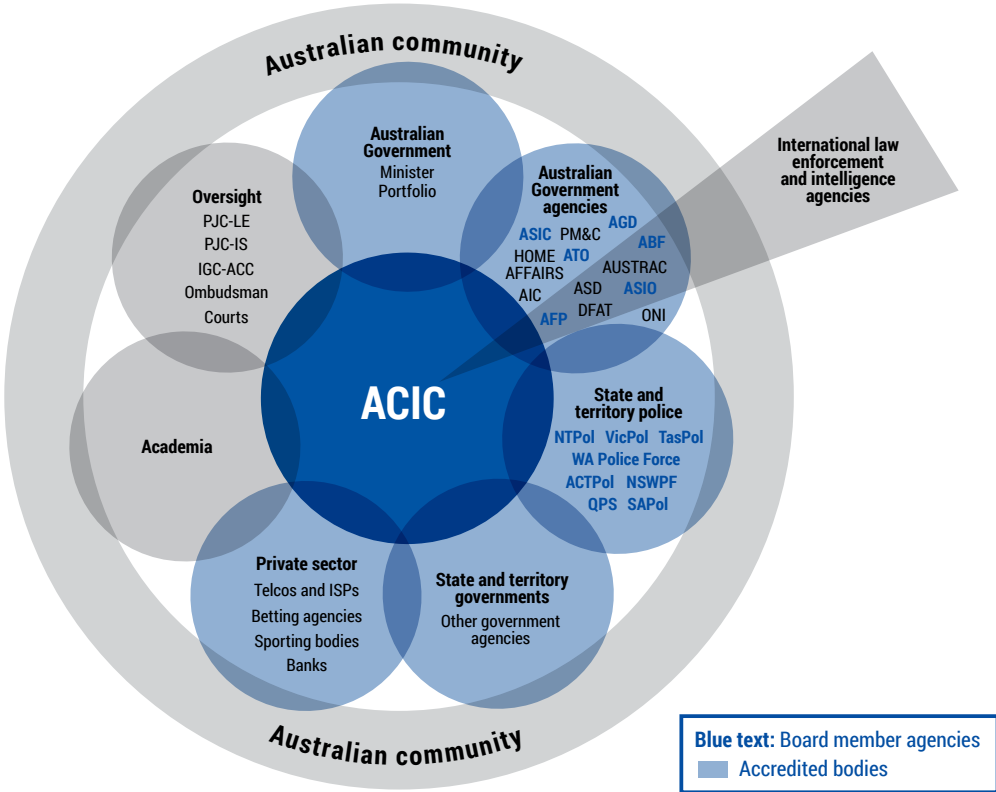
Our stakeholders

We work with a wide range of stakeholders to achieve a shared national outcome of a safer Australia, as shown in Figure 1.3.

Our stakeholders include:

- ▶ **Australian community**—We undertake our activities in order to support and improve the safety of the Australian community, through generating and sharing intelligence about serious and organised criminal activity, supporting police partners to respond to crime, or providing information to support decision-making on entitlement or employment through the NPCS.
- ▶ **Australian Government**—We report to the Minister for Home Affairs and work within the Home Affairs portfolio to ensure that our response to serious and organised crime is coordinated across government.
- ▶ **Australian Government agencies**—We leverage our unique position to link Commonwealth and state law enforcement and intelligence agencies. We generate intelligence that is shared among relevant Australian Government partners to support responding to serious and organised crime in Australia. The heads of a number of Australian Government agencies are members of the ACIC Board.
- ▶ **State and territory police**—We provide state and territory law enforcement agencies with information and services that support them to undertake their role. Each police commissioner is a member of the ACIC Board and provides strategic direction and oversight to our agency.
- ▶ **State and territory governments**—We generate intelligence that can be used by state and territory governments to close opportunities for criminal activity, strengthen regulations or directly disrupt criminal activity through court proceedings.
- ▶ **International agencies**—We leverage our relationships with international law enforcement and intelligence agencies to support our response to serious and organised crime in Australia.
- ▶ **Private sector**—We rely on parties in the private sector to support the delivery of national police systems, act as accredited bodies and build relationships to support responses to the evolving criminal threats that Australia faces.
- ▶ **Academia**—We partner with established sources of scientific expertise within Australian academic institutions to ensure that we remain at the forefront of responding to serious and organised criminal threats to Australia.
- ▶ **Oversight bodies**—We are properly subject to significant external oversight, to make sure that we use our agency powers responsibly, effectively and in accordance with the law at all times.
- ▶ **Accredited bodies**—We have accredited certain organisations to help individuals apply for and submit police checks. These organisations are entrusted with direct access to the NPCS and play a vital role to help safeguard the Australian community.

Figure 1.3: Stakeholders



ABF = Australian Border Force, ACTPol = Australian Capital Territory Policing, AFP = Australian Federal Police, AGD = Attorney-General's Department, AIC = Australian Institute of Criminology, ASD = Australian Signals Directorate, ASIC = Australian Securities and Investments Commission, ASIO = Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, ATO = Australian Taxation Office, AUSTRAC = Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, DFAT = Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, IGC-ACC = Inter-Governmental Committee on the Australian Crime Commission, ISPs = internet service providers, NSWPF = New South Wales Police Force, NTPol = Northern Territory Police, ONI = Office of National Intelligence, PJC-IS = Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, PJC-LE = Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement, PM&C = Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, QPS = Queensland Police Service, SAPol = South Australia Police, TasPol = Tasmania Police, VicPol = Victoria Police, WA Police = Western Australia Police Force

Australia's criminal environment

We operate in a complex environment. Understanding the dynamic and changing criminal environment is critical to determining how Australia responds. Our work is central to ensuring an informed, collaborative and connected national response to serious and organised crime impacting Australia.

The main features of serious and organised crime as it affects Australia are as follows:

- ▶ **Destructive, pervasive and complex**—Serious and organised crime impacts the lives of Australians in complex and destructive ways. As criminals seek to exploit vulnerabilities and perceived gaps in law enforcement, Australians experience damage to families and communities, lost income, health and social impacts, and the erosion of public trust.
- ▶ **Big business**—Serious and organised crime costs the Australian community billions of dollars each year. The AIC estimates that the cost of serious and organised crime to Australia in 2016–17 was up to \$47.4 billion, including \$31.5 billion in direct costs and \$15.9 billion in prevention and response costs.
- ▶ **Globalised**—Geographic boundaries no longer contain criminal networks. Around 70 per cent of Australia's serious and organised criminal threats are based offshore or have strong offshore links.
- ▶ **Diversified**—Traditional organised crime activities endure, while new forms of business are emerging. Criminal groups diversify across multiple criminal markets, providing consistent revenue streams to finance higher risk ventures and enabling criminal enterprises to respond to shifts in supply and demand.
- ▶ **Resilient**—Criminal groups are enduring and resilient, and respond to shifting global conditions and disruption. They collaborate for mutual gain, and quickly adapt methodologies to meet challenges and changes in their operating environment.
- ▶ **Concealed**—Serious and organised criminals blend criminal activity with legitimate business to support and conceal their criminal enterprises. Criminal groups corrupt officials, use violence and intimidation, and employ professional experts to advise on complex methods and techniques to hide their ventures from law enforcement.
- ▶ **Tech- and cyber-savvy**—Criminals quickly adopt emerging and advancing technologies, enabling increasingly sophisticated methods to counter law enforcement efforts. Cybercriminal groups can target thousands of Australians simultaneously from anywhere in the world. They enhance their capability through dark web forums and marketplaces in which they share tools, techniques and information.
- ▶ **National security threat**—Enhanced counter-terrorism efforts are being made throughout Australia, but the links between terrorism and broader organised crime and volume crime in Australia remain. This includes Australians who engage in organised crime to generate funds to support proscribed terrorist groups or to support individuals who depart Australia to engage in terrorist activities.

The world continues to be challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Just like the rest of the community, those involved in serious and organised crime have been forced to adapt quickly in order to conduct their operations. We have adapted in response, to continue to target them and share timely and relevant intelligence and information with our partners.

Feature



NATIONAL CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

“ NCIS has been made available to law enforcement partners to use in active operations for the first time.

The National Criminal Intelligence System (NCIS) aims to securely connect law enforcement and intelligence agencies to share information nationally in a targeted, timely and relevant way.

Sharing key criminal information and intelligence from multiple agencies and systems through a single viewpoint allows law enforcement officers to be better informed about risks, the details of entities, events of interest and the histories of individuals—improving officer safety and critical incident decision-making.

The NCIS Operational Exposure Release occurred in March 2021, making NCIS available to law enforcement partners to use in active operations for the first time. This is the first step in a phased rollout to operational users.

The operational exposure phase of NCIS provides the opportunity for police agencies to evaluate the integrity of the data and use of the system in operational conditions, including testing against agency-specific policies and procedures.

NCIS is being used by a group of more than 250 operational exposure users from police partner agencies and the ACIC, providing much needed access to nationwide policing information.

Those participating are able to provide feedback on their experiences and needs when using the system, to improve future capability.

Users can construct complex searches across multiple datasets and receive results returned in a consolidated national view. More than 28,000 searches were conducted on the new system between 9 March and 30 June 2021.

Highlighting the advantages that NCIS can provide to our police partners, a comparison search was carried out for a significant theft case, using both a local system and NCIS. Searching for matches on the local system returned 380 image results, which took substantial time to compare against CCTV footage.

By using key words to narrow down the search, filtered through only the local agency's own data, NCIS returned just 69 results. The person of interest was matched against the theft suspect within the first 10 results.

The NCIS Program Team is continuing to engage with ACIC operations and all police partner agencies to share their datasets, within lawful constraints, prior to the increased adoption of NCIS by law enforcement users during 2021–22.