AUSTRALIAN
**CRIMINAL
INTELLIGENCE
COMMISSION**

**BOARD OF THE AUSTRALIAN CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE COMMISSION**
# CHAIR ANNUAL REPORT
## 2023–24

## Contact details

This report and more information about the ACIC are available at acic.gov.au.

To enquire about this report, please contact:

Director Communication and Media
Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission
GPO Box 1936, Canberra City ACT 2601

02 6268 7343
media@acic.gov.au

acic.gov.au

facebook.com/ACIC

instagram.com/acic_govau

linkedin.com/company/acic-govau

youtube.com/@ACIC_govau/videos

## Publication details

# Letter of transmittal

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Home Affairs
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Minister for Cyber Security
Minister for the Arts
Leader of the House

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Home Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA  ACT  2600

Dear Minister

On behalf of the Chair of the Board of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC), I present the *Board of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Chair Annual Report 2023–24*.

The report has been prepared in accordance with section 61 of the Australian Crime Commission Act 2002 (ACC Act), which requires the Chair of the ACIC Board to prepare a report on the agency's operations during the year as soon as practicable after 30 June.

Section 61(1) of the ACC Act requires the Chair of the Board to furnish the report to the Inter-Governmental Committee on the Australian Crime Commission (IGC-ACC) for transmission. This was completed out of session in March 2025. No comments on the report were received from the IGC-ACC.

The report is to be laid before each House of Parliament within 15 sitting days of that house, after your receipt of the report.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Chair of the Inter-Governmental Committee on the Australian Crime Commission
19 / 6 / 2025

# Contents

This section provides an introduction to the ACIC, explains the role of this report, and presents the Chair's review of ACIC achievements in 2023−24.

**SECTION**

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

# About the ACIC

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) is Australia's national criminal intelligence agency. The purpose of the agency is to protect Australia from serious criminal threats by collecting, assessing and disseminating intelligence and policing information.

In 2023–24, the ACIC achieved this by:

- collecting, analysing and disseminating criminal intelligence
- providing national policing information systems and services to support police and law enforcement partners to investigate, solve and prevent crimes
- delivering background checking services to help organisations make informed decisions about the suitability of applicants for certain entitlements or positions of trust.

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.

The agency is part of the Attorney-General's portfolio.

# About this report

This report by the Chair of the ACIC Board documents the operations of the ACIC as required under section 61 of the ACC Act. This report is presented to the Australian Government Attorney-General and the appropriate minister of each state and territory via the Inter-Governmental Committee established under section 8 of the ACC Act.

A separate annual report by the ACIC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) fulfils the reporting requirements for government agencies under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. It includes information about the ACIC's progress against the purpose and performance criteria set out in the portfolio budget statements and corporate plan, details of the agency's structure and staffing, and audited financial statements.

By producing these reports, the Chair and the CEO are able to concisely address the requirements of the respective legislation. Both reports are publicly available at www.acic.gov.au/publications/annual-reports.

Table 1.1 sets out the annual report requirements of the ACC Act and shows where they are addressed in this report. The board does not have its own staff or budget, so there are no financial statements to present.

**Table 1.1:** Guide to compliance with reporting requirements of the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002*

| Information required under section 61(2) | Location in this report |
|---|---|
| (a) a description of any special ACC investigations undertaken during the year | Section 4: Special ACIC operations |
| (b) a description, which may include statistics, of any patterns or trends, and the nature and scope, of any criminal activity that have come to the attention of the ACC during that year in performance of its functions | Section 3: Australia's criminal environment |
| (c) any recommendations for changes in the laws of the Commonwealth, of a participating State or of a Territory, or for administrative action, that, as a result of the performance of the ACC's functions, the Board considers should be made | None to report |
| (d) the general nature and the extent of any information furnished by the CEO during that year to a law enforcement agency | Section 4: Special ACIC operations<br>Section 5: Criminal intelligence and national policing information |
| (da) the general nature and the extent of any information disclosed by the CEO during that year to a body corporate under section 59AB | Section 5: Criminal intelligence and national policing information |
| (e) the extent to which investigations by the ACC have resulted in the prosecution in that year of persons for offences | Section 4: Special ACIC operations<br>Section 6: Legislative framework and legal actions |
| (ea) the extent to which investigations by the ACC have resulted in confiscation proceedings | Section 4: Special ACIC operations<br>Section 6: Legislative framework and legal actions |
| (g) particulars of the number and results of:<br><br>(ii) applications made to the Federal Court or the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (Division 2) under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977* for orders of review in respect of matters arising under this Act; and<br><br>(iii) other court proceedings involving the ACC;<br><br>being applications and proceedings that were determined, or otherwise disposed of, during that year | Section 6: Legislative framework and legal actions |

# Chair's review

In 2023–24, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) continued its support to over 71,000 frontline officers in combatting threats from transnational serious and organised crime faced by Australia. By providing officers access to policing systems, thousands of intelligence reports and millions of background checks, the ACIC contributes to crime prevention and day-to-day operations, making our communities safer. The ACIC offers its partners a unique perspective and expertise that is essential to harden Australia's response to organised crime networks.

I would like to welcome Heather Cook as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the ACIC, appointed in January 2024, and acknowledge the contributions of Matthew Rippon, who acted as CEO from November 2022 until Ms Cook's term commenced.

## Criminal intelligence

In 2023–24, the ACIC delivered insights on the highest-level criminal threats impacting Australia by:

- using its coercive powers to discover new information relating to its special ACIC operations
- producing 2,892 unique intelligence products and making 18,745 disseminations of those products among 276 stakeholders, including national and international law enforcement and intelligence partners
- producing and publishing reports 19, 20 and 21 of the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program.

The ACIC plays a critical role in bringing law enforcement partners together to build operational strategies and coordinate disruption activities. Working with its partners, the ACIC contributed to 43 disruptions of criminal entities in 2023–24.

The ACIC's work with law enforcement partners led to the seizure of drugs and precursor chemicals with an estimated street value of $1.0 billion, and $10.9 million in cash and assets.

## National policing information systems and services

One of the ACIC's core responsibilities is to provide and maintain 12 national policing information systems and related services to help its partners prevent, detect and reduce crime in the Australian community. This included helping police solve crimes by enabling more than 369,000 fingerprint, 158,000 DNA and 80 crime scene ballistics positive data matches.

The National Criminal Intelligence System (NCIS) enhances the capabilities of law enforcement and intelligence agencies by providing secure, national access to criminal intelligence and information, contributing to a safer Australia by providing a truly national picture of crime.

A key achievement in 2023–24 was the completion of NCIS Tranche 1, which introduced a robust, high-performance and secure cloud-based platform for information sharing. This provides a comprehensive national data view, advanced search capabilities, and the ability to maximise data value shared. All police agencies and the Department of Home Affairs now have access to this information through a user interface, and some agencies have integrated NCIS into their local systems.

## National Police Checking Service

The National Police Checking Service (NPCS) remains a key activity for the ACIC, enhancing the safety of the community by providing timely and accurate information to support employment or entitlement decisions. During 2023–24, the service processed more than 7.2 million nationally coordinated criminal history checks.

## Looking ahead

At a time of rapid change, serious and organised crime threats are increasingly complex, sophisticated and transnational. The ACIC's legislative frameworks and capabilities must evolve to ensure the agency has the ability to keep pace and combat the complex and ever-changing criminal threat environment.

Over the next 12 months, the ACIC will focus on enhancing its capabilities, building on existing strengths to meet the needs of its partners and stakeholders. As part of this, the ACIC will be working towards implementing the recommendations arising from the Independent Review of the ACIC and associated Commonwealth law enforcement arrangements, as agreed by government. This will provide more clarity around the ACIC's role in the broader National Intelligence Community. By being on the forefront of countering serious and organised crime, the ACIC's work directly impacts the safety and wellbeing of our communities, the integrity of our borders, and our economic prosperity.

In my role as Chair, I look forward to providing strategic direction to the ACIC and leading the board as a unified force to reduce harm from evolving transnational serious and organised crime threats.

Reece P Kershaw APM
Chair
Board of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission
14 December 2024

This section details the role and composition of the ACIC Board, and summarises the key activities of the board and its subcommittee in 2023–24.

# SECTION

# 2

# ACIC BOARD

# Role

The ACIC Board is established under section 7B of the ACC Act and has a range of functions as set out in section 7C of the Act. The functions include:

- determining priorities for national criminal intelligence and national policing information systems and services
- providing strategic direction and determining the ACIC's priorities
- authorising, by determination, special ACIC operations and special ACIC investigations to occur, and determining the classes of persons to participate in the operations and investigations
- establishing task forces
- disseminating strategic criminal intelligence assessments
- making recommendations about expenditure and fees for national policing information systems and services
- determining policies and conditions for providing nationally coordinated criminal history checks and disclosing national policing information
- reporting to the Inter-Governmental Committee on the ACIC's performance.

# Members and observers

The board is chaired by the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, and comprises the heads of each Commonwealth, state and territory police force and a number of national security and regulatory agencies, as set out in section 7B(2) of the ACC Act.

The CEO of the ACIC is a non-voting member of the board. The CEO of the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre attends board meetings as a non-voting observer.

# Meetings and matters considered

The board considers a range of issues at each meeting, including current and emerging strategic priorities, performance against responsibilities, progress of national policing information systems projects, and special account revenue.

The board met 4 times in 2023–24, and:

- approved the new NPCS model to deliver a package of service delivery enhancements
- agreed to recommend no additional variances to the amount of the national policing information services charges and fees, noting an increase was agreed in 2023, which took effect on 1 July 2024
- approved the extension of National Task Force Morpheus, to continue the information-sharing arrangements for criminal information and intelligence on outlaw motorcycle gang (OMCG) activity – at a national level, this enhances understanding, collaboration and operational effectiveness in relation to the policing and disruption of OMCGs
- approved the extension of the Transnational Criminal Intelligence Task Force (Vestigo Task Force), for the sharing of criminal information and intelligence about transnational serious and organised crime with the Five Eyes Law Enforcement Group and trusted international partner agencies
- approved the extension of the authority for the ACIC to maintain national policing information systems for and on behalf of the states and territories
- considered arrangements for the funding and progress of NCIS and the National Firearms Register
- noted the status of national policing information investment proposals and the national policing information capability roadmap
- endorsed the *ACIC Strategic Direction 2024–28*, which sets out the agency's key priorities for the next 4 years, together with the capabilities required to achieve its strategic objectives.

# Subcommittee

The board's National Policing Systems Subcommittee is responsible for considering national policing information systems and National Policing Information Systems and Services Special Account (Special Account) matters and making recommendations to the board for endorsement.

The subcommittee met twice in 2023–24, and discussed and received regular updates from the ACIC on:

- outcomes from meetings of the NPCS working group, through which the ACIC and police agencies are developing a future NPCS model for board consideration
- national policing information systems and current national policing information projects, including the ACIC's 2024–25 investment proposals
- Special Account revenue.

This section draws on intelligence gathered by the ACIC and its partners to describe the nature, scope, trends and patterns of criminal activity impacting Australia.

# SECTION

# 3

# AUSTRALIA'S CRIMINAL ENVIRONMENT

# Key characteristics

Australia's serious and organised crime environment is dynamic and continues to adapt to an increasingly technological and globalised landscape. Criminal entities are pervasive, resilient and destructive.

- **Serious and organised crime networks are interconnected and international.** Serious and organised crime groups are increasingly prioritising collaboration over competition, and continue to demonstrate their reliance on the services, access and expertise of other criminal enterprises to succeed in their illicit ventures.

- **Technology expands opportunities for foreign and domestic criminals.** Today's digital world is consistently targeted by criminals seeking to exploit emerging and advancing technologies. Cybercrime, one of many forms of technology-enabled crime, can be perpetrated against Australians from anywhere in the world, with increasing adoption of online services and platforms expanding opportunities for criminal targeting. Criminal capabilities and expertise can be developed through online forums and marketplaces.

- **Professional facilitators and trusted insiders enable serious and organised crime activity.** Professionals such as accountants, lawyers and real estate agents are knowingly or unknowingly used for their skillsets and insider knowledge, to mask criminal activity. These professionals can be used to conceal criminal enterprises and to help manage proceeds of crime. Trusted insiders within Australian supply chains can be leveraged to exploit their access to and knowledge of border security and law enforcement processes.

- **Australia's national security threat is amplified by serious criminal threats.** Offshore jurisdictions of risk pose challenges to law enforcement and intelligence agencies engaged in protecting Australia's national interests. There are enduring links between serious and organised crime entities and national security issues, including illegal activities that undermine the integrity of Australia's border and governance processes.

- **Serious and organised crime entities are driven by profit.** They seek to maximise their profits, and will go to extreme lengths to achieve their goals. Traditional club or group affiliations no longer prohibit criminal interactions, with serious and organised crime networks driven by the maximisation of their profits.

- **The illicit activities of criminal entities are pervasive, destructive and costly.** Serious and organised crime contributes to the erosion of public order and governance, negatively impacting the lives of Australians. Criminal activity increases economic pressure by adding unfair competition for legitimate businesses and industries and increasing the burden on critical health and welfare services.

The ACIC uses a combination of collection, analysis and assessment capabilities to illuminate the hidden, complex and dynamic criminal environments. The agency collects and analyses intelligence to inform partners, and assists to coordinate strategic, national responses to serious criminal threats.

# Key enablers

Enablers are activities or capabilities that underpin and contribute to the effectiveness of serious and organised crime and may be crimes themselves. The key enablers described here are widely used in Australia, although not all enablers are present in every illicit market. Multiple enablers may be used concurrently within the same criminal enterprise.

## Technology

Most serious and organised crime activities make use of technology and digital infrastructure. Examples include technology-enabled identity crime and fraud in the areas of banking, trade and superannuation.

The ability to target individuals remotely from any location in the world is attractive to serious and organised crime groups that use technology to target the financial sector or trade illicit goods via the dark web. Serious and organised crime uses tools such as generative AI to simplify complex tasks, enabling offenders to commit more sophisticated crime online with increased frequency and speed against greater numbers of victims, while lowering barriers of entry and creating opportunities for non-specialists to enter criminal markets. The rapid increase in generative AI capability and uptake in serious and organised crime is a challenge for law enforcement.

Through the use of online platforms and services, child sexual exploitation and abuse are becoming more prevalent, commodified and organised. Offenders increasingly use technological means to commit acts of exploitation and abuse such as grooming children and distributing child abuse material.

## Professional facilitation

The role of professional facilitators of criminal activity – such as legal, real estate and accounting professionals and other business services providers (including registered migration agents and education agents) – is a fundamental issue for law enforcement and regulatory agencies. In an increasingly complex global environment, criminals engage a range of professional facilitators to assist them to commit crimes, avoid detection and conceal assets.

## Money laundering

Money laundering is a significant enabler of criminal activity and a potentially lucrative criminal enterprise in itself. Money laundering is a diverse activity, with a significant international dimension, carried out at all levels of sophistication.

## Identity crime

As well as being one of the most common types of crime committed in Australia, identity crime is an enabler of other significant criminal activities, including money laundering, financial crime, drug trafficking and fraud.

There is a growing trend towards commissioning identity crime online through the production and sale of identity documentation and fraudulent use of personal information.

The true extent of identity crime is difficult to quantify, due to under-reporting, differences in jurisdictional reporting, and instances where identify theft is undetected.

## Violence and intimidation

Violence and intimidation underpin serious and organised criminal activity in various ways. For example, they may be used to extort financial gain, to coerce people or businesses into facilitating or undertaking criminal activity, or to control drug networks and settle disputes.

Most violence involving organised crime occurs between criminal groups rather than being directed at the general public. When, as is increasingly the case, crime groups are indifferent to members of the public becoming 'collateral damage', the threat to the public is more direct. Due to under-reporting, it is difficult to determine the exact nature and extent of harm caused through the use of violence and intimidation by serious and organised crime groups.

## Public sector corruption

Exploitation of the public sector by serious and organised crime groups weakens the instruments of government and strengthens criminal networks, undermining the community's confidence in government and public officials.

Areas most at risk include bodies responsible for procurement, across all levels of government; frontline agencies such as police, customs and border protection; and any agencies responsible for dispensing government funding without established anti-corruption practices.

In world terms, Australia is relatively free from serious and organised criminal involvement in public sector corruption.

# Key markets

Australia is exposed to serious and organised criminal activities conducted locally and across geographic boundaries. Key crime markets include illicit commodities, such as drugs and firearms, and increasingly sophisticated enterprises such as financial crime and intellectual property crime.

## Illicit commodities

Serious and organised crime remains highly active in Australian markets for illicit commodities such as drugs, tobacco and firearms.

The illegal importation, manufacture, cultivation and distribution of harmful drugs in Australia generates billions of dollars in profits for organised criminal groups. The Australian illicit drug market is sustained by demand for a wide variety of substances, as described in Table 3.1. Some serious and organised crime groups capitalise on the demand by importing, cultivating, manufacturing or trafficking several drug types simultaneously.

Serious and organised crime groups are also involved in the highly lucrative illicit tobacco market in Australia, through the illegal importation of tobacco products and the local production of illicit tobacco.

While Australia has some of the strongest firearm controls in the world, illicitly obtained firearms remain a significant enabler of criminal activity. Members of organised crime groups, including OMCGs, use firearms for criminal purposes, but the nature and extent of firearms trafficking by these groups remains an intelligence gap. In 2023, the ACIC conservatively estimated that there were approximately 200,000 illicit firearms, comprising 190,000 long arms and 10,000 handguns, in the domestic illicit market.

**Table 3.1: Key substances in the Australian illicit drug market 2023−24**

| Substance | Market characteristics |
| --- | --- |
| Cannabis | Serious and organised crime (SOC) groups are well established in the Australian cannabis market, although they do not dominate it. The market is robust and profitable, and supplied by a very large number of often unsophisticated groups and individuals. Almost all cannabis consumed in Australia is cultivated domestically, and some cultivation is increasingly sophisticated and coordinated.<br><br>Report 21 of the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (the Program) shows cannabis consumption has been at least double the consumption of methylamphetamine throughout the time that both substances have been monitored by the Program. Average consumption of cannabis increased in both capital cities and regional areas between April and August 2023. Regional average consumption exceeded capital city average consumption. |
| Cocaine | All cocaine in Australia is imported from source countries in South America. A range of SOC groups import cocaine, through many different transhipment points.<br><br>Report 21 of the Program shows that cocaine consumption decreased in capital cities and increased in regional areas between April and August 2023. Average capital city consumption exceeded average regional consumption. There was record high cocaine consumption in regional areas in August 2023. During the year ended August 2023, an estimated 4,037 kilograms of cocaine was consumed nationally, worth an estimated street value of $1.31 billion. |
| Hallucinogens and anaesthetics | While the markets for hallucinogens and anaesthetics do not rival the major illicit drug markets, they do have a tangible SOC presence and show signs of expansion.<br><br>The related markets of GHB, GBL and 1,4-BD involve multi-tonne illicit importations and substantial diversion from legitimate industrial uses.[a] All 3 substances feature in poly-drug use with substances such as methylamphetamine. The drug 1,4-BD was scheduled in Commonwealth legislation in early 2024 and since then there have been sizeable detections at the border.<br><br>The ketamine market is also a concern, due to ketamine's links to poly-drug use with other illicit stimulants and the very large market for ketamine in northern Asia. Ketamine is both illicitly imported and diverted domestically from the medical and veterinary sectors. Ketamine has been monitored by the Program since December 2020. Report 21 of the Program shows ketamine excretion decreased in both capital cities and regional areas between April and August 2023. Capital city average excretion exceeded regional average excretion. |
| Heroin | All heroin in Australia is imported by SOC groups, and almost all of it originates in South-East Asia. Report 21 of the Program shows that heroin consumption increased in both capital cities and regional areas between April and August 2023. Capital city average consumption exceeded regional average consumption. During the year ended August 2023, an estimated 999 kilograms of heroin was consumed nationally, worth an estimated street value of $449.55 million. |
| Synthetic opioids | Synthetic opioids that form part of the illicit market in Australia include nitazenes, opioid-based pain relief medications such as fentanyl and oxycodone, opioid substitution drugs, and codeine.<br><br>The Program monitors the consumption of fentanyl and oxycodone, with data reflecting both licit and illicit use. Report 21 of the Program shows that between April and August 2023 consumption of fentanyl increased in both capital cities and regional areas, but remained lower than levels reported earlier in the Program. Consumption of oxycodone increased in the capital cities and decreased in regional areas during that period. Regional average consumption exceeded capital city average consumption for fentanyl and for oxycodone.<br><br>Nitazenes pose a significant potential threat and are worthy of close monitoring. |

**Table 3.1: Key substances in the Australian illicit drug market 2023−24 (continued)**

| Substance | Market characteristics |
|---|---|
| MDMA[b] | SOC groups are involved in the importation, domestic manufacture (to a limited extent) and distribution of MDMA in Australia. Most MDMA that is imported into Australia is sourced in Europe.<br><br>Report 21 of the Program shows that average consumption of MDMA decreased in the capital cities and increased in regional areas between April and August 2023. Average regional consumption exceeded average capital city consumption. During the year ended August 2023, an estimated 962 kilograms of MDMA was consumed nationally, worth an estimated street value of $99.51 million. |
| Methylamphetamine | Numerous SOC groups are involved in the importation, domestic manufacture and distribution of methylamphetamine in Australia. Methylamphetamine causes disproportionate harm in Australia because there is strong and resilient demand for the drug in both capital cities and regional areas.<br><br>Report 21 of the Program shows that average methylamphetamine consumption decreased in the capital cities and increased in regional areas between April and August 2023. Capital city average consumption exceeded regional average consumption. During the year ended August 2023, an estimated 10,585 kilograms of methylamphetamine was consumed nationally, worth an estimated street value of $10.58 billion. |
| New psychoactive substances | SOC groups have limited influence in the market for new psychoactive substances, which have similar chemical structures to, or mimic the effects of, other illicit drugs. These substances have been available in Australia since the mid-2000s. Hundreds of the substances are introduced to the market each year, and many feature for only short periods of time. Through the surface web and the dark web, the internet is used extensively for buying, selling and sharing information on these substances. The market is highly reactive, appearing to change in response to user preferences and to changes in other drug markets, and does not rival the traditional drug markets in terms of use or size. |
| Performance and image enhancing drugs | Users from an increasingly diverse demographic are consuming a wide range of performance and image enhancing drugs (PIEDs). SOC groups are involved in the importation and manufacture of PIEDs, but do not dominate the market. The market for PIEDs is significantly linked to the markets for illicit stimulants and illicit pharmaceuticals. In this market, the role of professional facilitators such as doctors and pharmacists is a major concern. There is potential for growth in the market as the substances are used increasingly to enhance personal image (as well as performance). |
| Precursor chemicals | Precursor chemicals are essential for illicit drug production, and the diversion and trafficking of precursor chemicals is a profitable enterprise in itself. Precursor chemicals can be diverted from a range of sources, including the legitimate chemical industry, the scientific supply industry, the transportation and logistics industry, or medical facilities and pharmacies.<br><br>SOC groups dominate the sophisticated end of this market, and large importations of precursor chemicals have been detected in recent years. This market has potential to increase as the domestic manufacture of drugs forms part of the business model of sophisticated SOC groups. The market is increasingly seeing SOC groups move to the use of pre-precursors to avoid regulatory and legislative controls over the more traditional precursors. |

a    GHB is the chemical gamma hydroxybutyrate. GBL (gamma butyrolactone) and 1,4-BD (1,4-butanediol) are closely related chemicals that convert to GHB when ingested.

b    MDMA is the chemical 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as 'ecstasy'.

## Financial crime

Financial crimes are diverse in their nature and scale, and in the level of harm they cause. Financial crime markets include cybercrime, investment and financial market fraud, revenue and taxation fraud, superannuation fraud, card fraud, and health and welfare fraud.

The expansion of serious and organised crime into the financial sector poses a significant risk to the integrity of Australia's economy, financial markets, regulatory frameworks and revenue collection.

## Transnational crime markets

Among the crime markets that transcend national boundaries, the following present a particular threat to the Australian community and Australia's national security interests:

- **Cybercrime –** Cybercrime covers a wide variety of offences that present a significant threat to Australians, including identity crime, computer hacking, phishing, botnet activity, computer-facilitated crime, and cyber intrusion directed at private and national infrastructure.
- **Money laundering –** Organised criminals use professional money laundering syndicates to conceal the illicit nature of funds sourced from criminal activities which distort financial markets.
- **Online sexual exploitation and abuse of children –** Technological advances are enabling the commodification and industrialisation of this crime. Offenders increasingly use anonymising tools such as end-to-end encryption to conceal offending behaviour, network as groups, and share tools and methodologies to facilitate abuse. The uptake of digital and mobile technologies by children and young people significantly increases their risk of exposure to online sexual exploitation and abuse.
- **Human trafficking and slavery –** This is a global concern, and the mass movement of refugees and migrants in recent years has escalated the threat. Under-reporting is endemic within this crime type, but increased awareness and outreach programs are likely to have contributed to increasing referrals to law enforcement for these offences.
- **Visa and migration fraud –** Serious and organised crime groups exploit the Australian visa and migration system, engaging the services of professional facilitators to enable entry into Australia.
- **Intellectual property crime –** Piracy and counterfeiting are serious international issues. The main forms of intellectual property crime in Australia are the importation of counterfeit goods such as clothing and the domestic manufacture of goods that infringe copyright.
- **Environmental crime –** This is diverse in nature and encompasses several crime markets, including wildlife crime, illegal logging and fishing, and illegal disposal of rubbish. Transnational organised crime syndicates and opportunistic individuals exploit these markets, which are characterised by high profit margins and low detection rates.

This section provides an overview of special ACIC operations and describes the operations that informed mission critical intelligence in 2023–24.

# SPECIAL ACIC OPERATIONS

# Overview

Subject to authorisation by the ACIC Board in line with section 7C of the ACC Act, the ACIC may conduct:

- **special ACIC operations**, which are focused on gathering intelligence around particular criminal activity so that response decisions can be informed by an improved understanding of the extent, impact and threat of that activity (which may contain an investigative component)
- **special ACIC investigations**, which are designed to reduce the incidence and effect of specified serious and organised crime activity (including through disruption and prevention) by collecting evidence and intelligence about criminal activity.

Special ACIC investigations and special ACIC operations are authorised by the board by written determination. Nine special ACIC operations authorised in December 2022 were active in 2023–24, as described in this section of the report. No new special ACIC operations or special ACIC investigations were authorised in 2023–24.

## Special powers

Where the board has authorised a special ACIC operation or special ACIC investigation to occur, ACIC examiners, who are independently appointed statutory office holders, may exercise coercive powers under Division 1A and Division 2 of the ACC Act for the purpose of that special ACIC operation or special ACIC investigation.

The coercive powers allow an examiner to summon a person to give evidence at an examination and compel them to answer the questions asked of them. Examiners may also require a person to produce documents or things.

A range of ancillary processes may enable an ACIC examiner to secure compliance with a summons. These include court-issued warrants for the arrest of a person to ensure that the person attends an examination, and court orders for the production of an examinee's passport.

Division 1A also empowers an examiner to request or require information from Commonwealth agencies and, where arrangements are in place, certain state agencies.

Additionally, eligible persons – that is, ACIC examiners or members of the staff of the ACIC who are also constables – may apply for search warrants to search for things relevant to a special ACIC operation or a special ACIC investigation that is occurring, in circumstances where there is a risk that the item or document would be concealed, lost, mutilated or destroyed if a summons to produce it were issued.

## Task forces

The evidence and intelligence gathering activities of special ACIC operations and special ACIC investigations are informed by, and contribute to, the work of board-established task forces which support collaboration between partners seeking to disrupt criminal enterprises through intelligence-led responses.

The board approves the partner agencies who participate in board-established task forces. Agency heads of partner agencies nominate staff to participate in an ACIC task force, and those participants become members of the staff of the ACIC for the purposes of that task force. Participants work collaboratively within the framework of each task force to achieve its objectives.

Three board-established task forces operated in 2023–24, as shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Board-established task forces at 30 June 2024**

| Task force | Established | Expires |
|---|---|---|
| National Task Force Morpheus | 1 July 2014 | 30 June 2027 |
| Transnational Criminal Intelligence Task Force (Vestigo Task Force) | 30 November 2016 | 30 June 2027 |
| Task Force Reston | 20 April 2023 | 30 June 2025 |

## Priority crime themes

In 2023–24, the active special ACIC operations focused on 8 priority areas of criminal threats affecting Australia, as identified in the ACIC's *Corporate Plan 2023–24*:

- criminal networks
- cybercrime
- firearms
- illicit drugs
- illicit tobacco
- national security
- serious financial crime
- victim-based crime.

Across all priority areas, a key focus was disseminating mission critical intelligence to domestic and international partners to enable the disruption of transnational activities of serious and organised crime targets that are based offshore or strongly connected offshore, to reduce their impact on Australia.

# Active operations

This section describes the aims and activities of special ACIC operations in 2023–24. The ACIC's *Annual Report 2023–24* contains additional details on the agency's achievements in priority areas, including comparisons with previous reporting periods.

## Cybercrime

Cyber-related crime covers a wide variety of offences that present a significant threat to Australia, including identity crime, computer hacking, phishing, botnets, computer-facilitated crime, and cyber intrusion directed at private and national infrastructure.

Advances in technology have offered new opportunities for serious and organised crime groups, which use 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.

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Cybercrime) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses information and intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime's involvement in cyber-related crime. The Cybercrime 2022 special operation is focused on offences directed at computers or other information communications technologies and offending facilitated by computer.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- investigate and collect intelligence on cyber-related crime activities
- identify persons and entities committing cyber-related crime offences
- understand the dynamic and changing environment in which cybercrime offences are committed
- understand the scale of impacts of cybercrime offences, such as the numbers and types of victims, the financial impacts, and the extent of cyber security vulnerabilities
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes and to assist in the development of government policy and law reforms.

## Drugs

The illicit drug trade poses significant socioeconomic and health risks to the Australian public. The social burden that illicit drugs place on the community, and the long-term health consequences of their use, led to the development of the Australian Government's National Drug Strategy.

The ACIC provides leading-edge national research and intelligence on illicit drugs and licit drugs that can be abused, through the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program.

The ACIC also produces the Illicit Drug Data Report, which provides governments, law enforcement agencies and interested stakeholders with a national picture of illicit drug data. The report provides an important evidence base to assess current and future illicit drug trends, and assists decision-makers in the development of strategies to combat the threat posed by illicit drugs.

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Drugs) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses information and intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime relating to drug offences. Drug offences that fall within the scope of the special operation include trafficking, manufacturing, possessing, and importing and exporting illicit drugs.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- monitor, investigate and collect evidence on the illicit drug markets, both domestically and internationally, to develop a comprehensive understanding of the serious and organised criminal threats that impact Australia
- identify persons and entities committing drug offences, and the relationships between different persons and entities
- identify emerging techniques, equipment and materials in the manufacture of illicit and licit drugs that may be exploited by serious and organised crime groups
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes and to assist in the development of government policy and law reforms.

The special operation also examines and investigates offences against the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, which sets out the legal requirements for the importation, supply and manufacture of therapeutic goods in Australia.

## Firearms

Firearms are used by serious and organised crime groups to protect interests and commit acts of violence. The use and possession of firearms by serious and organised crime groups and the trafficking and importation of illicit firearms are serious concerns for Australia. Traffickers supply illicit firearms to organised crime networks, either by illegally obtaining them from the licit market or by facilitating their illegal manufacture or importation.

Illicit firearms are a desirable commodity for serious and organised crime groups and an enabler of criminal activity.

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Firearms) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses information and intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime's involvement in illicit firearms.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- investigate and collect intelligence on the illicit firearms market
- identify persons and entities involved in committing firearm-related offences and identify the relationships between the persons and entities involved
- understand the methods and techniques by which serious and organised crime groups source and supply firearms
- identify vulnerabilities in the industries and processes involved in the importation or distribution of firearms
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes and to assist in the development of government policy and law reforms.

## Illicit Tobacco

Illicit tobacco is the importation and exportation of tobacco and the selling or manufacturing of tobacco where the required customs/excise duty has not been paid. The illicit tobacco market in Australia is viewed as a low-risk, high-reward venture for serious and organised crime groups. Illicit tobacco generates significant profits, allowing criminal groups to absorb losses from detection and disruption. Criminal groups will continue to adapt their methodologies in response to enforcement strategies.

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Illicit Tobacco) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime's involvement relating to illicit tobacco.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- investigate and collect intelligence on the illicit tobacco market
- identify persons and entities involved in committing offences related to illicit tobacco, and identify the relationships between those persons and entities
- understand the methods and techniques by which serious and organised crime groups conduct this offending
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes and to assist in the development of government policy and law reforms.

## National Security Threats

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (National Security Threats) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised threats impacting Australia's national security.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- investigate and collect evidence of national security threats
- identify and investigate security-related risks to Australia's economy, institutions and governments
- identify persons and entities involved in committing offences related to national security and identify the relationships between those persons and entities
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes to address vulnerabilities and combat national security threats.

## Serious Financial Crime

Serious financial crime encompasses financial offending: fraud, money laundering, financial information offences, superannuation and investment fraud, foreign acquisitions, sanctions, sophisticated tax evasion, and serious company violation offences.

Almost all organised crime is motivated by profit. The ACIC helps to remove the financial motivation to engage in criminal activity by investigating financial crime, and developing and disseminating intelligence that better informs the response to financially motivated criminal activity.

The ACIC's investigations incorporate the work of multi-agency national task forces, including:

- the Fraud Fusion Taskforce, to detect, disrupt and prevent fraud and serious and organised crime in the National Disability Insurance Scheme and other government programs
- the Serious Financial Crime Taskforce, to facilitate the coordinated identification of, and response to, financially motivated criminal activity
- the Phoenix Taskforce, the Black Economy Standing Taskforce and the Fintel Alliance, to enhance the integrity of the financial system in Australia.

The ACIC Board-approved Task Force Reston facilitates the sharing of criminal information within the Fraud Fusion Taskforce and supports the development of enhanced national responses to detect, disrupt and prevent fraud and related criminal activity within Australian Government payments and programs.

The Fraud Fusion Centre leads the ACIC's contribution of mission critical intelligence to the Fraud Fusion Taskforce and Task Force Reston. The Fraud Fusion Centre brings together a multi-disciplinary team of investigators, intelligence analysts and data specialists to identify and target serious and organised crime networks and other fraud actors exploiting Australian Government programs and payments designed to help the most vulnerable members of society.

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Serious Financial Crime) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses information and intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime relating to financially motivated criminal activity.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- investigate and collect intelligence on financially motivated criminal activities
- identify persons and entities committing financially motivated criminal activities
- understand the dynamic environment of financial crime, such as new and emerging methodologies to launder money, including cryptocurrency
- identify vulnerabilities in Australia's financial systems
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes and to assist in the development of government policy and law reforms.

## Supply Chains (Imports and Exports)

Supply chains are used by serious and organised crime groups to facilitate the importation and exportation of drugs, illicit tobacco and regulated commodities.

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Supply Chains (Imports and Exports)) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised threats impacting Australian supply chains.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- investigate and collect evidence of threats impacting Australian supply chains
- identify persons and entities involved in committing criminal activity both domestically and internationally, and identify the relationships between those persons and entities
- understand the new and emerging methodologies used by serious and organised crime groups to import and export illicit commodities or goods that bypass law enforcement actions
- identify vulnerabilities in the industries that are involved in the importation and exportation of goods, including the logistics, maritime, aviation and storage industries
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes and to assist in the development of government policy and law reforms.

## Victim-Based Crime

Victim-based criminal activities include exploitation of child material, child sex offending, human trafficking, and slavery.

Child sexual abuse and exploitation transcend international borders, and networking between child sex offenders underpins access to child abuse material, facilitators, methodologies and victims.

Technology is enabling access to victims and driving more complex child abuse and exploitation activities. It is a vector for organised criminal networks to exploit, and will lead to industrial-scale opportunities for serious and organised crime and increase the risk to children and the volume of child sexual abuse.

Human trafficking exploits vulnerable populations. Australia is a destination country of victims of human trafficking. Victims of human trafficking are exploited as a commodity to generate profit for serious and organised crime groups.

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Victim-Based Crime) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime's involvement in victim-based offending.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- investigate and collect evidence of victim-based criminal offences
- identify persons and entities involved in committing criminal activity, and systems that are used by serious and organised crime groups to enable the exploitation of vulnerable persons
- identify opportunities to prevent organised abuse of children
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes and to assist in the development of government policy and law reforms.

## Visa and Migration Fraud

Through the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Visa and Migration Fraud) 2022, the ACIC collects and analyses intelligence to identify, investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime's involvement in people smuggling and offences against the *Migration Act 1958*, such as visa fraud and passport forgery.

The aim of the special operation is for the ACIC to:

- investigate and collect intelligence on how visa and migration fraud is facilitated for serious and organised crime groups by professional facilitators
- understand the methods and techniques by which criminals conduct visa and migration fraud
- understand the scale of visa and migration fraud and its impact on the Australian community
- identify vulnerabilities in industries involved in Australia's migration program and disseminate intelligence to partner agencies to address those vulnerabilities
- disseminate intelligence to its partners to enable enforcement, disruption and prevention outcomes and to assist in the development of government policy and law reforms.

# Quantitative results

Table 4.2 summarises the quantitative results of special ACIC operations for a range of activities supporting the ACIC's strategic objectives in 2023–24. It does not include results from ACIC activities that were not related to special ACIC operations.

The ACIC's *Annual Report 2023–24* contains statistics on the agency's performance against the quantitative measures detailed in its *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, including comparisons with previous reporting periods.

**Table 4.2: Quantitative results of special ACIC operations 2023–24**

| Authorised activities | | Historical[a] | Special ACIC operation | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Cybercrime | Drugs | Firearms | Illicit Tobacco | National Security Threats | Serious Financial Crime | Supply Chains | Victim-Based Crime | Visa and Migration Fraud |
| Coercive powers | Exams | 0 | 2 | 31 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 78 | 16 | 2 | 2 |
| | Notices | 0 | 0 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 107 | 10 | 0 | 1 |
| | Products[b] | 25 | 3 | 160 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 277 | 69 | 0 | 4 |
| Intelligence products | Analytical | 5 | 2 | 55 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 62 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Tactical | 74 | 6 | 737 | 246 | 92 | 8 | 987 | 224 | 21 | 4 |
| Disseminations | Analytical | 55 | 49 | 712 | 47 | 67 | 19 | 836 | 1 | 18 | 18 |
| | Tactical | 393 | 61 | 5,250 | 2,114 | 436 | 29 | 5,216 | 1,028 | 102 | 12 |
| | Stakeholders[c] | 73 | 43 | 121 | 32 | 46 | 20 | 149 | 46 | 30 | 18 |
| Identified criminality | Unknown[d] | 0 | 0 | 171 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 104 | 11 | 152 | 0 |
| | Known[e] | 0 | 0 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Disruptions | Severe | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Significant[f] | 1 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Seizures ($m) | Cash/assets | 0 | 0 | 3.95 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.91 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Drugs[g] | 576.22 | 0 | 176.94 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 48.26 | 203.53 | 0 | 0 |
| | Tobacco[h] | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Arrests and convictions | Charges | 6 | 0 | 174 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 110 | 45 | 0 | 0 |
| | Persons | 1 | 0 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| | Convictions | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

a   Outcomes that occurred after an operation/investigation closed, to which intelligence collected, produced and disseminated during the active period of the operation/investigation materially contributed.
b   Intelligence products derived from use of coercive powers.
c   Stakeholders that received a dissemination.
d   Previously unknown criminal.
e   Known criminal operating in a previously unknown area of criminality.
f   In addition, 1 significant disruption was under a non-determination project.
g   Estimated street value.
h   Estimated tax excise value.

This section describes the ACIC's delivery of intelligence products, national policing information, and checking services, to support law enforcement and community safety in 2023–24.

# CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE AND NATIONAL POLICING INFORMATION

# Intelligence products

In 2023–24, the ACIC produced 2,892 unique intelligence products, including 132 assessments and insights, for its partners.

Analysis of the agency's performance against targets for criminal intelligence delivery is provided in the ACIC's *Annual Report 2023–24*.

## Strategic assessments

The ACIC's strategic assessments provide partners with assessments of crime types and markets or criminal issues of national importance. These assessments support and influence a range of intelligence, operational and response decisions, and inform government consideration of future strategies, including policy development and legislative reform.

In 2023–24, the ACIC produced strategic assessments on a range of themes, including:

- the serious and organised crime network landscape and threat
- the money laundering environment
- serious and organised crime exploitation of Australia's migration system
- technical assessments concerning
  - insights from wastewater analysis
  - various drug manufacturing processes
- drugs impacting Australia, including fentanyl, fentanyl-type substances, nitazenes, xylazine, methylamphetamine, amphetamine, cocaine, and precursors.

## Strategic and operational insights

The ACIC's strategic and operational insights provide new insights into serious and organised crime threats, groups, vulnerabilities, methodologies and markets. These insights reflect key strategic observations and learnings from ACIC and partner intelligence and investigations, often gathered using coercive powers, covert capabilities and engagement with key agencies.

Intended for stakeholders with an in-depth understanding of the organised crime environment, strategic and operational insights provide decision-makers with a concise understanding of changing or emerging issues or threats. They inform and influence appropriate operational, regulatory and policy responses.

In 2023–24, the ACIC's strategic and operational insights covered a range of themes, including:

- the ACIC's National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program and bespoke wastewater projects
- illicit drugs, including trends in drug markets and contemporary and potential threats posed by specific drugs
- National Disability Insurance Scheme fraud and vulnerabilities
- threats posed by OMCGs
- new methods and trends in money laundering
- criminal communication.

## Disseminations

Three types of partners receive intelligence products from the ACIC: ACIC Board member agencies; other Australian partners; and certain law enforcement and intelligence agencies outside Australia, such as the United Kingdom National Crime Agency and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration.

The ACIC's non-board Australian partners include stakeholders not involved in traditional law enforcement – such as policy and regulatory agencies, and bodies involved in the social services, health, forensic services, aviation, and sports integrity sectors – who benefit from intelligence around vulnerabilities and potential criminal threats.

The ACIC made 18,745 disseminations of intelligence products to 276 partners in 2023–24. Of those disseminations, 65.4% were to ACIC Board member agencies, 20.9% were to non-board Australian partners, and 13.7% were to international partners.

The ACIC disclosed information to 6 private sector bodies, on a total of 13 occasions, in accordance with the circumstances defined in section 59AB of the ACC Act. Information or intelligence products were disclosed to sporting and betting entities.

# National policing information systems and services

As law enforcement agencies, border protection agencies and intelligence partners continue to be challenged by serious and organised criminals moving between jurisdictions and diversifying their criminal activities, the ACIC has an important role in brokering access to policing and criminal information and intelligence holdings across Australia.

The ACIC does this through IT systems and linked intelligence databases that deliver information-sharing solutions between Commonwealth, state and territory agencies, and bring together essential law enforcement information from around the country and make it accessible to all Australian police and law enforcement agencies.

The ACIC's national policing information systems give police and other accredited users the ability to complete national searches on a range of criminal data holdings, offering services that support checks, investigations and general police work.

Analysis of the agency's performance against targets for the provision of national policing information systems and services is provided in the ACIC's *Annual Report 2023–24*.

## Australian Ballistic Information Network

The Australian Ballistic Information Network assists police across Australia to identify ballistics data to link crimes, firearms and suspects. It helps police to electronically match crime scene ballistic evidence to the firearm used, or to link crimes where the same firearm or its components have been used at multiple scenes.

This system builds on ballistic libraries that operate in several states and territories.

Table 5.1 summarises key statistics for the network in 2023–24.

**Table 5.1: Australian Ballistic Information Network statistics**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 100% | 95.00% | n.a. | ✅ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 162 | n.a. | 107 | ✅ |
| Searches | 3,646 | n.a. | 4,015 | ❌ |
| Positive data matches | 83 | n.a. | 72 | ✅ |

n.a. = not applicable

## Australian Criminal Intelligence Database

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Database (ACID) is Australia's national criminal intelligence and information system, as mandated in section 7A(a) of the ACC Act. ACID is more than 30 years old and will eventually be replaced by NCIS.

ACID provides 25 Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement agencies and other regulatory authorities with the ability to securely share, collate and analyse criminal information and intelligence nationally. It contains intelligence collected and collated by the ACIC as well as intelligence uploaded by partners.

Table 5.2 summarises key statistics for the database in 2023–24.

**Table 5.2:** Australian Criminal Intelligence Database statistics

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability[a] | 99.90% | 98.50% | n.a. | ✓ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 1 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users[b] | 2,043 | n.a. | 2,193 | ✗ |
| Searches[b] | 258,546 | n.a. | 310,134 | ✗ |

n.a. = not applicable

a    This measure is for the ACID intelligence documents database and the Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network: Desk. This reflects the title users see when they log onto the application and is often referred to as ACID/ALEIN.

b    As ACID is over 30 years old, maintenance and provisioning is complicated, leading to use progressively declining each year.

## Australian Firearms Information Network

The Australian Firearms Information Network helps police and other law enforcement agencies to manage the registration, licensing and movement of firearms. Users have near real-time access to the historical data in the system, which allows them to contribute to and share national records of the life cycles of all registered firearms in Australia.

All police partners, the Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Border Force are integrated with the network.

Table 5.3 summarises key statistics for the network in 2023–24.

**Table 5.3: Australian Firearms Information Network statistics**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 100% | 99.00% | n.a. | ✔ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 540 | n.a. | 477 | ✔ |
| Searches[a] | 344,061 | n.a. | 401,460 | ✖ |

n.a. = not applicable

a    In November 2023, Australian Firearms Information Network data became accessible through NCIS. This resulted in a reduction in search volume directly through the network.

## Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network

The Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network (ALEIN) is the secure extranet that provides  a gateway for partners to access the ACIC's intelligence databases and services. ALEIN is also a secure messaging channel for sharing criminal information and intelligence between Commonwealth, state and territory partners.

During 2023–24, ALEIN had 4,116 registered users. This was slightly below the 4-year average of 4,280.

## Court Portal

The ACIC's Court Portal provides magistrates courts and family courts in all Australian states and territories with read-only access to information from the National Police Reference System (NPRS) that relates to protection orders and domestic violence orders (DVOs). The information is provided by the courts and provisioned into the NPRS by police agencies.

The Court Portal provides a national information-sharing capability in support of the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme. By ensuring that local courts and police can collaborate to manage DVOs effectively, the portal contributes to the increased safety of victims of domestic violence and the wider community.

In 2023–24, the system was used by the courts to conduct 3,465 searches for information related to protection orders and DVOs.

# National Automated Fingerprint Identification System

Australian police use the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System to identify individuals from their fingerprints or palm prints. The system helps police to solve crimes by matching crime scene evidence to persons of interest. It enables near real-time uploads of prints from crime scenes, helping police to identify suspects in minutes.

The Department of Home Affairs also uses the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System, to support Australia's migration program.

Table 5.4 summarises key statistics for the system in 2023–24.

**Table 5.4: National Automated Fingerprint Identification System statistics**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 99.99% | 99.50% | n.a. | ✔ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 1 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 471 | n.a. | n.a.[a] | n.a. |
| Searches | 1,976,035 | n.a. | 1,468,293 | ✔ |
| Positive data matches[b] | 369,815 | n.a. | 461,828 | ✘ |

n.a. = not applicable

a    The 4-year average is not available because the system changed the way it counts 'active users' in 2021–22. Previously, all accounts were considered 'active' if they received an automated email; however, this does not indicate whether the accounts were actually being used. The current method cannot be applied historically.

b    Matching data for the system now includes tenprint matches as well as latent print identifications. A 'tenprint' is a generic term for a fingerprint form comprising a person's finger and palm prints by electronic imaging, black ink or photography, taken under controlled conditions. The 4-year average has been recalculated with the tenprint data included for each historic year. The Department of Home Affairs data is no longer stored in the system following the NAFIS NextGen upgrade, which has contributed to the decline in the number of positive data matches in 2023–24.

## National Child Offender System

The National Child Offender System helps police to protect the community by enabling them to uphold child protection legislation in their state or territory.

The system allows Australian police to record and share child offender information and directly enables police to manage key information to meet the requirements of the relevant child protection legislation in each state and territory. It includes the Australian National Child Offender Register and the Managed Person System.

Table 5.5 summarises key statistics for the system in 2023–24.

**Table 5.5: National Child Offender System statistics**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 100% | 99.50% | n.a. | ✓ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 1,381 | n.a. | 1,205 | ✓ |

n.a. = not applicable

## National Criminal Intelligence System

NCIS is the core system for sharing national policing information and intelligence in Australia. The system provides law enforcement and intelligence agencies with a comprehensive, unified picture of criminal activity and enables them to work more collaboratively.

NCIS contributes to a safer Australia by arming agencies with the cross-border information they need, when they need it, to address and prevent criminal activity. By sharing a national view of crime from multiple agencies, and delivering targeted, timely, relevant and prioritised national policing information, NCIS ensures that law enforcement officers are better informed about risks to themselves and the community and can respond accordingly.

In 2023–24, data on firearms, international travel movements, and Aviation Security Identification and Maritime Security Identification cardholders was added to NCIS, along with a range of improved functions.

The New South Wales Police Force, Queensland Police Service, Victoria Police and Western Australia Police Force have integrated NCIS into their local systems and are sharing policing data. The Australian Federal Police (including Australian Capital Territory Policing), South Australia Police and Tasmania Police integrated NCIS with their local operational systems in 2023–24 and are progressing projects to enhance the data they share.

In 2024–25, the Northern Territory Police NCIS integration project will commence, along with an intelligence uplift project and improvements to the extensibility of the NCIS platform. New capabilities and data will be added, and enhanced data from the Australian Federal Police, South Australia Police and Tasmania Police will be made available.

Table 5.6 summarises key statistics for NCIS in 2023–24.

**Table 5.6: National Criminal Intelligence System**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 99.88% | 99.90% | n.a. | ❌ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 28.1 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 13 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users – system to system | 35,630 | n.a. | n.a.[a] | n.a. |
| Users – user interface | 47,373 | n.a. | n.a.[a] | n.a. |
| Searches | 25,500,307 | n.a. | n.a.[b] | n.a. |

n.a. = not applicable

a   The 4-year average is not available because the system was new to production in 2021–22. The results for 2022–23 were 993 system-to-system users and 35,499 user interface users.

b   The 4-year average is not available because the system was new to production in 2021–22. The result for 2022–23 was 1,940,226 searches.

## National Criminal Investigation DNA Database

The National Criminal Investigation DNA Database holds samples of DNA profiles collected by Australian police from crime scenes, convicted offenders, suspects and volunteers. The database and its integrated forensic analysis tool help police to solve crimes and eliminate innocent people as suspects, by linking DNA profiles from crime scenes with DNA profiles from persons of interest and other crime scenes.

The database also holds DNA profiles from missing persons, family members of missing persons and unknown human remains, and has the capability to use DNA to link family relationships, to facilitate quick identification of disaster victims and help resolve missing persons cases. The software is configured to manage the complex policy and legislative differences between Australian jurisdictions.

Table 5.7 summarises key statistics for the database in 2023–24.

**Table 5.7:** National Criminal Investigation DNA Database statistics

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 100% | 99.00% | n.a. | ✓ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 121 | n.a. | 114 | ✓ |
| Positive data matches | 158,212 | n.a. | 116,870 | ✓ |

n.a. = not applicable

## National Firearms Identification Database

The National Firearms Identification Database sets uniform national standards for the identification of firearms registered within Australia.

The database is a reference tool that enables police to identify and characterise a firearm using descriptors such as make, model, calibre and magazine capacity. It assists police to ensure that firearms are recorded consistently during registration, importation or transfer of ownership and movement across state and territory borders. The database is also available for the public and can be accessed via nfid.acic.gov.au.

Table 5.8 summarises key statistics for the database (excluding website usage) in 2023–24.

**Table 5.8:** National Firearms Identification Database statistics

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 100% | 96.00% | n.a. | ✓ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 352 | n.a. | 240 | ✓ |
| Searches | 94,143 | n.a. | 66,030 | ✓ |

n.a. = not applicable

## National Missing Persons and Victim System

The National Missing Persons and Victim System provides Australian state and territory police with the ability to share information on long-term missing persons and unidentified human remains. The system can match ante-mortem and post-mortem dental records and perform other advanced searches.

The system is also used by Australian and New Zealand police to identify victims of disasters. Interpol uses the same software for disaster victim identification, and Australian teams are familiar with the Interpol system and processes. This approach makes it easier for countries to assist each other in the aftermath of a regional or global disaster.

Table 5.9 summarises key statistics for the system in 2023–24.

**Table 5.9: National Missing Persons and Victim System statistics**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 100% | 96.00% | n.a. | ✅ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 231 | n.a. | n.a.[a] | n.a. |

n.a. = not applicable

a   The 4-year average is not available because a new version of the system was deployed in June 2024. The result for 2022–23 was 1,003.

## National Police Reference System

The NPRS equips police with the knowledge they need to make on-the-spot decisions when dealing with persons of interest. It is available to more than 71,000 police officers, investigators and analysts across Australia, enabling them to share critical intelligence.

The system provides key national reference data such as names, photographs, identity information, criminal history (charges and convictions), and information on warnings, warrants, wanted persons, and firearms. The data is accessible from handheld devices, in-car terminals and desktop computers.

The implementation of NCIS continued to result in a decrease in the numbers of users and searches of the NPRS in 2023–24, due to NPRS data being made available through NCIS.

Table 5.10 summarises key statistics for the system in 2023–24.

**Table 5.10: National Police Reference System statistics**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 99.91% | 99.50% | n.a. | ✓ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 61 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 6 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 24,755 | n.a. | 63,380 | ✗ |
| Searches | 15,470,471 | n.a. | 38,238,734 | ✗ |

n.a. = not applicable

## National Vehicles of Interest System

The National Vehicles of Interest System enables police to record and search for local or interstate vehicles that may be stolen or suspicious. System users can also enquire about vehicle component information, national vehicle registration and description information, and national driver licence information provided by the National Exchange of Vehicle and Driver Information System hosted by Austroads (the peak organisation of Australasian road transport and traffic agencies).

Table 5.11 summarises key statistics for the system in 2023–24.

**Table 5.11: National Vehicles of Interest System statistics**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 99.99% | 99.00% | n.a. | ✓ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 183 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 2 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Users | 39,586 | n.a. | 35,442 | ✓ |
| Searches | 7,686,018 | n.a. | 7,040,963 | ✓ |

n.a. = not applicable

# Checking services

The ACIC works with Commonwealth, state and territory agencies to deliver checking services which enhance the safety of the community by providing timely and accurate offence history information that helps organisations to make informed decisions about the suitability of applicants for a range of employment, registration, licensing and other entitlements.

The ACIC conducts regular audits to ensure that only authorised users who require access to its systems have that access.

## National Police Checking Service

The NPCS helps to protect the safety of the community by minimising the risk that unsuitable people will be appointed to positions of trust. To deliver the NPCS, the ACIC works with accredited bodies that submit requests for nationally coordinated criminal history checks, and with police agencies that vet requests when a potential match with criminal records has been identified.

Accredited bodies – including certain government agencies, private sector businesses and brokers, not-for-profit organisations, and screening units responsible for the assessment of people who apply to work with children or vulnerable people – are allowed controlled access to the NPCS Support System so that they can submit requests for checks. As the regulator of the accredited bodies, the ACIC provides education and conducts audits to ensure that they comply with the agreement that gives them that access.

Demand for nationally coordinated criminal history checks is high and continues to rise. In 2023–24, the NPCS processed more than 7.2 million requests for checks, the highest number processed since the system was implemented in 2012.

Table 5.12 summarises key statistics for the NPCS in 2023–24.

**Table 5.12:** **National Police Checking Service statistics**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability[a] | 99.94% | 99.00% | n.a. | ✅ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 61 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 6 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Timeliness – non-urgent checks completed within 10 business days | 97.24% | 95.00% | n.a. | ✅ |
| Timeliness – urgent checks completed within 5 business days | 98.37% | 95.00% | n.a. | ✅ |
| Checks processed | 7,214,458 | n.a. | 6,436,818 | ✅ |

n.a. = not applicable

a    Availability of the National Police Checking Service Support System.

## Working with Children Checks National Reference System

The Working with Children Checks National Reference System provides a centralised database for the sharing of 'negative notice' decisions for Working with Children Check (WWCC) applicants between state and territory screening agencies.

Integration with the system enables screening agencies to view information on persons who have been denied a WWCC in other jurisdictions. Agencies can use that information, supported by criminal history and risk assessment information, to vet WWCC applicants or to monitor current WWCC holders.

The system permits a screening agency to search for key negative decisions of interstate screening agencies when deciding upon a new application. The system also permits a screening agency to undertake batch searches of all current cardholders against the national dataset, to establish whether negative notices for cardholders exist in a particular state or territory.

Integration is now complete in all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory, which is considering legislative changes to assist with its integration to ensure a federated approach.

Table 5.13 summarises key statistics for the system in 2023–24.

**Table 5.13: Working with Children Checks National Reference System**

| Measure | 2023–24 result | Board-agreed benchmark | 4-year average | Result ≥ benchmark/ average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability | 100% | 98.70% | n.a. | ✅ |
| Reliability – average days between unplanned national outages | 366 days | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Reliability – number of national unplanned outages | 0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Searches | 196,890,775 | n.a. | n.a.[a] | n.a. |
| Negative decisions | 148,255 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |

n.a. = not applicable

a    The 4-year average is not available because the system has been progressively adopted across jurisdictions since 2019–20. Once most systems were online, internal reporting commenced during 2022–23. This is the first year of external reporting.

This section summarises legislative changes and parliamentary committee activities shaping the ACIC's legislative framework, and legal actions and outcomes involving the ACIC, in 2023–24.

# LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND LEGAL ACTIONS

# Legislative changes

One significant change was made to the legislative framework for the ACIC's responsibilities and activities in 2023–24. The *Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Omnibus No. 2) Act 2023* commenced on 28 November 2023, making validations relating to the ACC Act.

The *Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Omnibus No. 2) Act 2023* introduced provisions that validate all things done in reliance on certain authorisations or determinations by the ACIC Board in relation to special ACIC operations or special ACIC investigations. The Act also had the effect of validating any further derivative uses of information or intelligence obtained by the ACIC in reliance on these authorisations and determinations.

The Act did not amend or otherwise alter any of the existing legislative safeguards that apply to the ACIC Board's power to make a determination, including the requirement for the board to be satisfied that a determination to authorise a special ACIC operation or special ACIC investigation is in the public interest, as informed by the board members' collective experience; and the requirement for the board to set out within the determination the purposes of the special ACIC operation or special ACIC investigation.

Similarly, the Act did not diminish any of the oversight or scrutiny mechanisms that apply to the ACIC.

# Charges and convictions

In 2023–24, ACIC intelligence contributed to operational activities that led to law enforcement partners charging 88 people with criminal offences, laying a total of 335 charges. The number of charges laid was below the 2022–23 total of 746 charges.

As a result of law enforcement partners' prosecutions arising from ACIC intelligence, one conviction was secured in 2023–24, for offences related to illicit drugs and criminal participation. The conviction related to charges laid in a previous financial year. The convicted person appeared before a court for sentencing in 2023–24, and the sentencing outcome resulted in a custodial sentence of 10 or more years.

Offences against the ACC Act can be dealt with by way of prosecution, or through contempt proceedings. The appropriate approach is determined by the unique context of every matter. In 2023–24, 3 prosecutions were commenced in relation to offences against the ACC Act. These matters are currently before the courts.

# Proceeds of crime actions

The *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* provides for the proceeds of crime to be controlled, confiscated and potentially forfeited to the Commonwealth to discourage criminal activity and prevent reinvestment in further criminal activity. In addition, under equivalent state or territory legislation, state and territory partners may control, confiscate and recover proceeds of crime, based on ACIC intelligence.

In conjunction with its partners, the ACIC works to undermine the profitability of criminal enterprises. Table 6.1 summarises the outcomes of law enforcement partners' proceeds of crime activities that resulted from ACIC intelligence.

**Table 6.1: Proceeds of crime outcomes arising from ACIC referrals 2023−24**

| Type | Amount ($m) |
|---|---:|
| Restrained[a] | 51.70 |
| Confiscated[b] | 1.16 |
| Recovered[c] | 0 |

a   Assets are frozen or restrained due to a suspicion of criminal activity.

b   Criminal involvement is confirmed and the court orders a defendant to pay money to the government or forfeit assets. This can be in the form of a forfeiture order, a pecuniary penalty order or a conviction-based forfeiture.

c   Money obtained from the transfer of money or the sale of assets is paid to the government.

# Contempt proceedings

In certain circumstances, ACIC examiners have the power to apply for a witness to be dealt with for contempt of the ACIC. Those applications are heard in either the Federal Court of Australia (Federal Court) or the relevant state or territory Supreme Court.

A single contempt proceeding was finalised in 2023–24, in *Sage v AYI23* [2023] FCA 1336.

AYI23 (a court-ordered pseudonym) appeared before an ACIC examiner in answer to a summons. AYI23 was asked questions which the examiner required him to answer. AYI23 refused to answer each question. On 5 April 2023, contempt proceedings were commenced in the Federal Court.

On 16 June 2023, AYI23 entered a plea of guilty for the contempt. AYI23 maintained that plea on the day of the hearing on 19 October 2023.

On 2 November 2023, AYI23 was sentenced in relation to the charges of contempt of the ACIC for refusing to answer questions that an examiner required him to answer. AYI23 was sentenced to 7 months imprisonment.

# Other court proceedings

The ACIC is subject to legal challenge as a normal part of its operations. This may occur in the context of applications in the Federal Court for judicial review under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977* or section 39B of the *Judiciary Act 1903*, or as part of the criminal justice process, such as in contested subpoenas or applications for a stay of criminal proceedings.

In 2023–24, 2 judicial review applications involving the ACIC were made to the Federal Court and were determined or otherwise disposed of, as reported below.

## *Sage v Commissioner of Taxation* [2023] FCA 1247

In 2020, before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the applicant sought production by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) of certain documents. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal declined to require the production of the material.

On 23 December 2022, the applicant filed an application to the Federal Court for judicial review of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal's decision. The ATO was named as first respondent. The ACIC, which had provided material to the ATO, was named as third respondent.

The ACIC did not play an active part in the proceedings and filed a submitting notice save as to costs.

On 19 October 2023, the Federal Court dismissed the application for review.

## *VDCL v Purcell* [2024] FCA 107

On 8 August 2023, VDCL (a court-ordered pseudonym) applied to the Federal Court for judicial review of an ACIC examiner's decision to issue a summons under section 28 of the ACC Act; the validity of the summons; and the determination made by the ACIC Board authorising an intelligence operation under section 7C(2) of the ACC Act (the Special Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Operation Determination (Serious Financial Crime) 2022).

On 15 September 2023, VDCL notified the Federal Court that he intended to discontinue the proceeding and sought leave to file a notice of discontinuance. The Federal Court granted that leave on 22 February 2024, and ordered VDCL to pay the ACIC's costs of the proceedings.

VDCL filed a notice of discontinuance on 16 May 2024.

# List of abbreviations

| ACC Act | *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002* |
|---|---|
| ACIC | Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission |
| ACID | Australian Criminal Intelligence Database |
| ALEIN | Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network |
| ATO | Australian Taxation Office |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| DVOs | domestic violence orders |
| Federal Court | Federal Court of Australia |
| NCIS | National Criminal Intelligence System |
| NPCS | National Police Checking Service |
| NPRS | National Police Reference System |
| OMCG | outlaw motorcycle gang |
| Special Account | National Policing Information Systems and Services Special Account |
| WWCC | Working with Children Check |

# Index

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and acknowledges their connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past, present and emerging.

The ACIC is Australia's national criminal intelligence agency. We provide mission critical intelligence to deliver our vision: An Australia hostile to criminal exploitation.

**acic.gov.au**