



SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

Review of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission reform package 2026

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) *Review of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission reform package 2026*. The reform package includes the [Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Bill 2026](#) (ACIC Bill) and the [Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission \(National Policing Information Charges\) Bill 2026](#) (NPI Charges Bill).

This submission primarily addresses the ACIC Bill, which will replace the [Australian Crime Commission Act 2002](#) (ACC Act) and represents a necessary modernisation of the ACIC's legislative framework. The ACIC Bill is intended to ensure the agency is appropriately enabled as Australia's national criminal intelligence agency in a serious and organised crime (SOC) environment, which has fundamentally evolved in scale, complexity and sophistication.

The reforms will give effect to key legislative recommendations arising from the [Independent Review of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and associated Commonwealth law enforcement arrangements](#) (ACIC Review), in line with the [Government's response](#).

The ACIC Bill modernises and simplifies an increasingly complex legislative framework to ensure the ACIC can continue to support government and partners with unique, actionable and insightful criminal intelligence.

The submission also provides brief commentary on the NPI Charges Bill, which establishes an administrative framework to support the sustainable delivery of nationally significant policing information systems.

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HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE ACIC

The ACIC was established on 1 July 2016 through the merger of the Australian Crime Commission and CrimTrac, with the aim of strengthening criminal intelligence outcomes by combining collection and analytical capabilities with critical national information holdings. The merger brought together agencies with distinct histories and functions under a single governance framework, reflecting an evolving understanding of the need for a national criminal intelligence capability.

However, the legislative framework underpinning the ACIC was largely inherited from the existing ACC Act, itself heavily informed by earlier legislation such as the [National Crime Authority Act 1984](#). Over time, as agencies merged and functions expanded, the ACC Act was incrementally amended to accommodate new roles, powers and governance arrangements. This resulted in a complex framework assembled through successive layers of reform, blending investigatory, intelligence and service delivery functions designed for a different operating environment and purposes.

The ACIC Review found that this accumulated complexity and lack of clarity had limited the ACIC's effectiveness as a criminal intelligence agency and reduced the strategic value of the intelligence the agency provided to partners – characterising the framework as complex, outdated and no longer fit for purpose.

THE SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME ENVIRONMENT IMPACTING AUSTRALIA

Australia's SOC environment has fundamentally changed since the ACIC's legislative framework was first established. Contemporary SOC threats are no longer confined to discrete crime types or identifiable criminal groups; they are diversified, converged and embedded across the fabric of Australian society.



This escalating harm is reflected in independent estimates of the economic impact of SOC. The Australian Institute of Criminology estimates that the total cost of SOC to Australia reached up to \$82.3 billion in 2023–24 – equivalent to around 3.2 % of gross domestic product – representing a significant increase from the previous year and underscoring the accelerating scale and systemic impact of SOC on the economy, community safety and national security.

Modern SOC networks operate as sophisticated, adaptive enterprises. They span illicit drugs, illicit tobacco, weapons, cyber-enabled fraud, human exploitation and the theft of public and private resources – moving seamlessly between criminal markets in pursuit of profit. These activities are increasingly enabled by digital platforms, encrypted communications, offshore facilitators and professional enablers, allowing networks to operate at scale, across borders and often beyond the immediate reach of traditional law enforcement capabilities.

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Critically, SOC is now deeply embedded within legitimate systems. Criminal networks exploit financial services, supply chains, regulatory frameworks and emerging technologies to obscure their activity, launder profits and legitimise their operations. This convergence with the lawful economy makes the threat more difficult to detect, more resilient to disruption and more damaging in its impact – undermining market integrity, eroding public trust and amplifying harm to communities.

TRENDS

- Crime is increasingly violent and visible.
- A growing intersection between crime and national security.
- Drugs are getting deadlier.
- Minors are increasingly being recruited.
- Serious and organised crime groups are building capability online.
- The evolving capability of 3D-printed firearms.
- Illicit funds laundered via crypto and emerging fintech.
- Insiders and secure comms continue to enable crime.

The scale and visibility of harm have also increased. SOC now drives significant violence in public spaces, recruits vulnerable people – including minors – to carry out criminal acts, and causes widespread financial and psychological harm through cyber-enabled scams and exploitation.

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While illicit drugs remain the largest single source of criminal revenue, SOC groups are opportunistic by design, targeting any vulnerability that can be exploited for profit, including government-funded programs and critical national systems.

Illicit drug activity is the largest cost category of serious and organised crime costing us **\$19 billion** each year.

In this environment, SOC is no longer solely a policing challenge.

It is a systemic threat with implications for economic prosperity, social cohesion, public confidence and national security. Responding effectively requires early insight into emerging threats, the ability to connect fragmented information and intelligence across jurisdictions and sectors, and coordinated responses that extend beyond enforcement alone.

Against this backdrop, the role of the ACIC as Australia's national criminal intelligence agency has become increasingly critical. The evolving SOC threat demands a national, intelligence-led posture – one that can illuminate hidden criminal ecosystems, anticipate emerging risks and support coordinated action across law enforcement, intelligence, regulatory and policy agencies to harden Australia against exploitation and keep Australians safe.

EMPOWERING AUSTRALIA'S CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY TO COUNTER THE THREAT

The ACIC Bill will enable the ACIC to operate as a modern criminal intelligence agency by aligning its functions, powers and safeguards with its intelligence mandate. The reforms ensure the agency has appropriate powers for an intelligence agency by recalibrating thresholds to reflect intelligence collection purposes while maintaining robust safeguards, removing unnecessary legislative complexity and duplication, and strengthening oversight and accountability. Collectively, these changes will enable the agency to fill critical national criminal intelligence gaps, collaborate with and support partner agencies when required, and deliver national-level insights without duplicating investigative or enforcement roles.

Clarify roles and reduce overlap

A central objective of the ACIC Bill is to clarify the ACIC's role within Australia's law enforcement and intelligence architecture, reducing duplication and reinforcing complementary responsibilities across agencies. The ACIC Bill makes clear that the agency's core role is criminal intelligence – not enforcement – that law enforcement agencies retain responsibility for investigations, arrests and prosecutions, and that the agency supports partners by obtaining and providing intelligence to inform targeting, prioritisation and strategic decision-making. While the agency may assist and cooperate with other agencies, the ACIC Bill makes clear that the ACIC's coercive and warrant-based powers may only be used to support the agency's intelligence functions, noting that any intelligence obtained may then be shared with partners in accordance with the ACIC Act.

This clarity is critical in a complex, multi-agency environment where SOC spans jurisdictions, crime types and sectors. Without clear role delineation, agencies risk duplicating effort, seeking access to the same information through parallel processes. The ACIC Bill enables the ACIC to act for the primary purpose of intelligence collection, allowing it to function in contexts where the evidentiary thresholds

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for police action have not yet been met. By aligning functions and powers to an intelligence mandate, the ACIC Bill enables the agency to coordinate national intelligence responses, fill national-level intelligence gaps, enhance threat discovery, surge intelligence support during periods of heightened threat or demand, and reduce the burden on operational agencies through consolidated intelligence activity. Therefore, the reforms strengthen coordination and reinforce the agency's role as an enabling capability, rather than an operational substitute for law enforcement.

Further, the ACIC Bill emphasises the ACIC's role as Australia's criminal intelligence agency, underpinning intelligence, law enforcement, regulatory and policy responses to SOC that impacts Australia and Australians. It signals that the agency's relationships with Commonwealth, state and territory, industry, higher education and community sectors are critical to Australia's response to the SOC threat.

Consistent with this clarification of roles, the ACIC Bill establishes that policing support to the ACIC will be delivered through a formal written agreement between the Australian Federal Police (AFP) Commissioner and the ACIC Director-General. This arrangement does not preclude state or territory police forces from providing policing support where appropriate. By removing the need for ACIC employees to hold AFP Special Member status, the ACIC Bill reinforces the agency's role as an intelligence agency, avoids the blurring of intelligence and policing functions, and ensures that the application of law enforcement powers remain clearly within police accountability frameworks. This arrangement will ensure that ACIC staff are able to execute powers and duties safely and effectively.

Modernise functions and powers

The ACIC Bill modernises and clarifies the ACIC's functions and powers to ensure they are appropriately aligned with its role as Australia's national criminal intelligence agency. The reforms do not confer new categories of powers on the agency. Rather, they adapt and consolidate existing powers – such as search warrants and controlled operation-type powers – that the agency has long exercised under multiple legislative regimes, bringing them into a single, coherent framework aligned with the ACIC's intelligence mandate and operating environment. This modernisation ensures powers are accessed at intelligence-appropriate thresholds, for clearly defined purposes, while removing complexity created by the incremental layering of investigatory frameworks over time. The ACIC Review identified that applying investigatory and evidentiary frameworks to intelligence functions had generated unnecessary complexity. The ACIC Bill addresses this by recalibrating how existing powers may be accessed and used, while strengthening oversight and safeguards.

Intelligence-appropriate thresholds and purpose

The ACIC currently operates within a complex operating environment and under multiple legislative frameworks predominantly designed to support law enforcement activities. This presents an ongoing challenge for the agency as an intelligence agency relying on these frameworks. The ACIC Bill will establish intelligence-appropriate thresholds for the use of the agency's powers, aligning their use with the ACIC's intelligence mandate, rather than an evidentiary or enforcement purpose.

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This does not expand the ACIC's authority. Rather, it reflects the different purpose for which information is collected – to identify, assess and understand SOC threats, build a national intelligence picture across jurisdictions and sectors, and support partner agencies to make informed decisions within their own mandates. The ACIC Bill will support community safety and policing outcomes in the evolving threat environment by enabling the agency to more effectively perform its anticipatory discovery and intelligence collection role to inform responses to harden the environment against SOC threats.

A core element of this framework is a modernised definition of SOC, which has been adapted to reflect the changing threat environment. The definition has been updated, but the core elements remain the same.

What is meant by 'serious and organised crime'?

A federal offence, or a state offence with a federal aspect, that may have occurred in the past, or may occur in the present or future in circumstances involving:

- 2 or more people
- substantial planning or organisation
- sophisticated methods or techniques

The minimum penalty threshold will be lowered from 3 to 2 years to better reflect the diversified and converged nature of contemporary criminal activity.

The revised definition supports the ACIC to operate in the anticipatory and discovery phases of intelligence investigations and removes existing constraints that require the agency to operate under authorities with evidentiary thresholds. A minimum penalty of 2 years' imprisonment is necessary to ensure the SOC definition captures a broad remit of offending – for example, some lower-level drug, money laundering or violence offences – which the agency regularly sees occurring alongside more serious criminal acts such as illicit drug trafficking. Restriction to a higher penalty threshold would prevent the agency from detecting and using these lower-level offences to discover and map SOC networks and to uncover the full breadth of their criminal activities. This change is critical to enabling the agency as Australia's criminal intelligence agency, and in differentiating it from law enforcement bodies nationally.

These changes will enable the ACIC to undertake intelligence collection at an earlier stage, before it is able to be known whether the intelligence indicates a link to SOC, in order to identify emerging criminal methodologies, map networks and assess risk. The ACIC Bill will result in the agency producing more unique, actionable and insightful intelligence before SOC activity matures and escalates to inform operational disruption activities and environment-hardening activities like government policy and legislative reform.

Critically, intelligence thresholds do not diminish safeguards. The use of powers remains purpose limited, subject to statutory authorisation requirements, and oversight through independent mechanisms.

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Example: Intelligence-led threat discovery

A sophisticated SOC network is operating within Australia, exploiting logistics pathways, financial systems and online platforms to facilitate illicit activity across multiple jurisdictions. While elements of the network are visible to individual agencies, the activity is compartmentalised and does not yet meet investigative or evidentiary thresholds for enforcement action.

Under the ACIC's current legislative framework, the agency may only access some powers for evidentiary purposes, so it is limited in its ability to discover the full extent of the SOC network's criminal activities.

The ACIC Bill will enable the agency to collect, correlate, analyse and evaluate intelligence at an early stage of threat discovery to identify and assess SOC threats. In doing so, the agency can map criminal networks, identify emerging methodologies and vulnerabilities, and develop a national picture of SOC and how it operates.

This will support timely, informed decision-making across government and ensures intelligence collection keeps pace with the evolving SOC threat environment. It will facilitate informed priorities and enforcement efforts of government and enforcement agencies.

Coercive powers

The ACIC Bill will retain the ACIC's long-standing access to coercive powers, recognising that these powers remain critical to the collection of criminal intelligence. The ACIC Review noted the criticality of the powers and that they should remain in force, with minor amendments to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Coercive powers are a critical capability for the agency that allow it to obtain intelligence relevant to SOC. The agency's coercive powers add significant value to help build a national picture of the SOC landscape to assist partners.

Example: Uncovering fraud in government funded programs

Coercive powers are a critical capability of the ACIC – the ACIC Bill will continue to give Examiners the power to compel persons to appear at an examination and answer questions on oath or affirmation, and the power to compel persons, corporations and government agencies to produce information, documents or things.

ACIC coercive powers can enable the ACIC to obtain intelligence on methodologies and the extent of exploitation of government programs, as well as reveal which SOC groups and actors may be involved and to what extent. This intelligence may be used to highlight vulnerabilities in current controls to enable government and relevant agencies to harden processes and systems to SOC exploitation. Further, the ACIC's coercive powers provide an effective mechanism to produce actionable criminal intelligence which is of value to law enforcement partners and to which they may not otherwise have access.

The ACIC Bill continues these critical powers, which have been long-standing for the ACIC and its predecessor agencies.

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The ACIC Bill implements a revised two-stage authorisation process. The first stage requires ministerial authorisation, based on a public interest test, to specify the relevant targets or SOC types in relation to which coercive powers may be used. The second stage requires an independent Examiner be satisfied to the requisite threshold, that the person or body concerned is likely to have information that would assist the ACIC to obtain intelligence relevant to SOC, and that issuing a summons or notice is reasonable in the circumstances. This dual-layer model ensures coercive powers remain targeted, proportionate and appropriate to an intelligence collection context.

Minor amendments are proposed to ensure these powers remain effective in a contemporary SOC environment where crime types are increasingly converging and digitally enabled.

Example: Flexibility to meet the convergence of threats

SOC groups impacting Australia aren't just drug dealers. An outlaw motorcycle gang (OMCG) with a strong presence in Australia is involved in drug trafficking, illicit tobacco, firearms trafficking, extreme violence, and serious financial crimes like money laundering and tax evasion.

The ACIC Bill introduces greater flexibility to conduct examinations in relation to one or more authorisations in force which will create a more efficient process for undertaking examinations and enhance the operational flexibility of the capability without diminishing any of the existing safeguards in place for witnesses.

Existing safeguards are preserved, including non-disclosure obligations, ACIC-specific secrecy offences, offences for non-compliance and misuse, and strict limitations on the use and disclosure of compelled material to protect individual rights and the integrity of intelligence holdings and processes.

Oversight by the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS) commenced on 4 June 2026 as enacted by the [Strengthening Oversight of the National Intelligence Community Act 2025](#) (SONIC Act)¹, further reinforcing assurance and accountability arrangements.

Controlled intelligence operations

The ACIC Bill establishes a dedicated statutory framework for controlled intelligence operations (CIOs), recognising CIOs as an existing and essential capability for intelligence collection in the SOC context. The purpose of the CIO scheme is to ensure that the ACIC can obtain intelligence relevant to SOC by enabling its capacity to gain close access to sensitive information through covert means. The scheme achieves this by permitting authorised persons – in limited and tightly regulated circumstances – to engage in conduct for which they may otherwise be criminally liable, in accordance with a CIO authority in order to obtain such intelligence.

¹ The SONIC Act reforms transitioned oversight of the ACIC from the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement to the IGIS and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, bringing the agency within the full National Intelligence Community oversight framework and ensuring more integrated scrutiny of its intelligence role.

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Rather than introducing a new power, the ACIC Bill places the ACIC's use of CIOs on a clearer, intelligence-specific legislative footing, aligned with the agency's role as a criminal intelligence agency, and broadly comparable to the special intelligence operations scheme in the [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979](#). The agency has historically relied on the controlled operations regime under the [Crimes Act 1914](#). However, in recent years this has become more complex with the agency's transition to an intelligence agency, while continuing to operate within a legal framework primarily designed for law enforcement and evidentiary purposes.

Example: Covert engagement with the criminal enterprise

A CIO may authorise a participant to pose as a provider for money laundering services and offer specialised services to facilitate transfer of funds or digital currency – thought to be proceeds of crime – into Australia. This action may assist the ACIC to obtain intelligence relevant to SOC by enabling it to gain close access to a target and their associated criminal ventures.

The CIO may enable the collection of intelligence on the target, their broader network and other criminal associates, as well as their criminal activities and methodologies. This intelligence may inform further intelligence operations to illuminate disruption opportunities, as well as directly inform law enforcement agency disruption efforts.

The current [Crimes Act 1914](#) controlled operations regime, while a key power for the ACIC, has a law enforcement purpose which has somewhat limited their utility in supporting the agency to effectively counter SOC impacting Australia. The ACIC Bill will embed a CIO power more clearly supporting ACIC intelligence collection, which will better support the national response to the SOC threat.

Intelligence relevant to SOC is often not accessible through overt engagement, voluntary information sharing, or other powers. Without covert methods, the ACIC would be limited to intelligence that criminal actors are willing – or inadvertently allow – to be exposed, leaving critical gaps in the national intelligence picture.

CIOs will be subject to a high level of upfront authorisation and ongoing control. Authorities will be issued by the Attorney-General – with limited provision for Director-General authorisation in urgent circumstances – and will be supported by strict issuing criteria, limitations on scope and conduct, and comprehensive reporting and record-keeping requirements. Independent oversight by the IGIS will ensure that the use of covert intelligence powers is subject to scrutiny. Taken together, these measures strengthen assurance, accountability and legal clarity around an established capability, while ensuring the ACIC can continue to collect intelligence critical to combating SOC.

Search warrant powers

The ACIC Bill enables the ACIC to continue to access search warrant powers – including the ability to search persons – where stringent legislative requirements are met. Access to search warrant powers is not new to the agency, but the ACIC Bill will ensure they are reframed within an intelligence-specific framework.

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A premises search warrant is a critical intelligence collection tool for the ACIC, to ensure the agency can, under appropriate authorisation, search a particular premises for documents or things relevant to SOC. Where considered necessary in the circumstances, the agency may be authorised to undertake activities that allow for the warrant to be exercised covertly. This is an important tool which enables the agency to gather anticipatory intelligence on SOC more effectively.

Example: Uncovering SOC network criminal activities without revealing agency interest

The ACIC may exercise a search warrant on premises to collect intelligence regarding the planning of illicit drug importations by a target or network. For example, the agency may investigate a maritime importation syndicate; however, the nature and timing of the commodity to be imported may be unknown. The exercise of a search warrant on relevant premises can reveal planning and detail in this respect. In certain circumstances, where the intelligence uncovered will be used to further map the network and its illicit activities, the agency may be authorised to undertake the search covertly so the target or network is not alerted to the interest of authorities.

A search warrant provides a necessary and important tool to access valuable and otherwise inaccessible information, which may be critical in the furtherance of future intelligence and operational activity.

Search of person powers support intelligence collection in circumstances where, if a summons or notice to produce has been issued under the ACIC's coercive powers regime, or were to be issued, the relevant information may be concealed, lost, destroyed or rendered inaccessible.

Example: Search of a person prevents loss of critical intelligence and ensures ACIC officer safety

The search of a person power is critical to supporting intelligence outcomes. The ACIC has experienced occasions where a person, upon service of a coercive notice to produce, has taken active steps to destroy, dispose of or conceal the document or thing required to be produced. For example, an individual served a notice to produce requiring production of their phones indicates they will not comply with respect to devices visibly in their possession, either by providing the device to another person or deleting content, in front of serving officers.

The search of a person power in such circumstances – as provided for by the ACIC Bill – would enable the search of the named individual to seize the phone and prevent the loss of critical intelligence.

The ACIC's use of search powers will be subject to Attorney-General authorisation, clearly defined legislative purposes limited to intelligence collection, strict execution conditions, comprehensive record-keeping and reporting obligations, and IGIS oversight.

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Criminal intelligence assessments

The ACIC Bill continues the ACIC's ability to make and give criminal intelligence assessments (CIAs), to inform certain background checks undertaken by AusCheck. CIAs form part of the background checking process for Aviation Security Identification Card and Maritime Security Identification Card (MSIC) applicants and, more recently, firearms licence applicants.

CIAs complement other types of background checks that are undertaken to inform the eligibility of individuals to access certain secure environments or to hold a firearms licence, including the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation's security assessments. CIAs acknowledge the ACIC may hold information relevant to SOC that may be critical in informing decisions as to the eligibility of individuals to access secure aviation and maritime environments, or to hold a firearms licence. CIAs form an important safeguard in securing Australia's border security systems and institutions, and in protecting the community from SOC-related firearms threats.

Example: Protecting our ports from SOC exploitation

The ACIC's CIA capability remains crucial to the integrity of the maritime and aviation sectors.

For example, a shift manager currently holding an MSIC works at a container terminal and has been the subject of multiple intelligence reports alleging their involvement in illicit drug activity. The individual also has links to OMCG members. In their position, they have influence over rosters, controlling who works and what roles they perform on particular shifts, which could be a significant advantage in facilitating illicit activity.

This intelligence is relevant to consideration of the individual's eligibility to hold an MSIC and whether they may use their position to facilitate the advancement of SOC. The ACIC Bill ensures the ACIC is able to continue making such assessments to protect Australia's interests from criminal exploitation.

Enable effective intelligence and information sharing

The ACIC Bill improves and streamlines the framework governing how the ACIC communicates criminal intelligence and information to partners, recognising that intelligence and information is most effective when it can be shared lawfully, appropriately and in a timely manner. Under the current legislative framework, the agency's disclosure provisions have become fragmented and overly complex, reflecting the incremental layering of amendments over time. This has led to inefficiencies and uncertainty, increasing the risk of delay and inconsistent application.

The ACIC Bill simplifies the way the ACIC shares intelligence and information with partner agencies, so it can do so more confidently and efficiently when carrying out its functions. It removes procedural constraints in the current framework – such as reliance on prescribed permitted purposes and senior-level delegation requirements – that have limited the timely and effective sharing of information in support of the agency's broader operations and the services that underpin its criminal intelligence mandate.

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Example: Effective communication better supports community safety outcomes

Practically, this will enable the ACIC to better support its partners – namely law enforcement agencies – nationally. For example, the agency may collect intelligence regarding the illicit drug importation activities of an individual and communicate this quickly, at officer level, to the AFP or a state or territory law enforcement agency, without the need to seek formal authorisation through consideration of the current complex legislative criteria, so that they may undertake disruption activities. Additionally, the ACIC Bill will enable that should the agency, in the process of an intelligence operation, come across non-SOC related information that is relevant to a policing partner’s functions, the ACIC will be able to communicate it for appropriate action.

More efficient and effective communication of ACIC intelligence will directly support community safety and partner agency operations.

In this way, the ACIC Bill strengthens the ACIC’s overall functionality by streamlining its ability to communicate intelligence in a timelier manner, which better supports coordinated, whole of government responses to SOC across Commonwealth, state and territory agencies, and non-government bodies.

The information sharing framework is supported by agency-specific secrecy offences for unauthorised use or communication – consistent with those applying across the National Intelligence Community (NIC) – alongside enhanced record-keeping and reporting requirements, and oversight by the IGIS. Together, these measures ensure information sharing remains controlled, auditable and proportionate, while reducing unnecessary barriers and enabling the agency to operate as a force multiplier that supports timely partner decision making within existing mandates.

Elevate oversight and accountability

The ACIC Bill aligns and strengthens our accountability with oversight arrangements to support the lawful and proportionate exercise of the ACIC’s powers. Recognising that some intelligence powers involve intrusive collection techniques, the ACIC Bill embeds robust legislative safeguards, including enhanced reporting, notification and record-keeping requirements, and mandatory periodic independent reviews to ensure the legislation remains fit for purpose.

As part of the broader intelligence reform package – and alongside amendments made through the SONIC Act – these measures support full and effective oversight of the ACIC’s intelligence activities by the IGIS and the PJICIS. The ACIC Bill supports that oversight framework by embedding requirements that facilitate the IGIS’s functions, and by enabling structured administrative arrangements between the agency and the IGIS to support ongoing, effective scrutiny. Together, these measures align the agency’s governance, oversight and accountability settings with those applying across the NIC.

Changes to how the ACIC accesses and uses powers are deliberately matched with strengthened external governance. The ACIC Bill aligns the agency’s governance model with those of other NIC agencies by clarifying ministerial responsibility for key intelligence authorisations and formally redesignating the agency head as the Director-General. This change reflects a nomenclature and structural alignment with the broader NIC, rather than the creation of a new accountability

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framework. Clear authorisation pathways enhance transparency and accountability, while ensuring decisions involving sensitive intelligence activities remain subject to appropriate executive oversight and insulated from operational interference, reinforcing public confidence in the lawful exercise of intelligence powers.

Strengthen national information holdings and data stewardship

National Policing Information systems

The ACIC Bill strengthens the ACIC's role as the administrator and steward of National Policing Information (NPI) systems – a national information capability composed of multiple interconnected systems. These systems underpin officer safety, public confidence and the integrity of nationally coordinated criminal history checks (NCCHCs) and information-sharing arrangements that support a broad range of policing and community safety outcomes. The ACIC Bill provides a clear legislative foundation for the agency to continue delivering NPI systems as an essential national capability, supporting national criminal intelligence coordination and timely, cross-jurisdictional information-sharing, including in response to SOC.

The ACIC delivers, manages and improves 15 NPI systems, including the National Criminal Intelligence System. The agency is also responsible for delivering key national initiatives such as the National Firearms Register. These systems support more than 72,000 police officers and other accredited users to undertake frontline policing, intelligence and investigative activities that protect the community.

The ACIC provides 3 types of systems to equip our partners with the information they need to detect, investigate, solve and prevent crimes:

1. Frontline systems to enable police agencies and accredited users to rapidly access and share critical operational information relating to persons of interest, vehicles, firearms and ballistics. They support day to day policing, immediate officer safety decisions and real-time, cross jurisdictional investigations.
2. Biometric and forensic systems provide nationally coordinated fingerprint and DNA capabilities that support the investigation and resolution of crimes, including identifying suspects, victims, missing persons, human remains and disaster victims.
3. Protection systems support public safety and victim protection by enabling police and accredited court users to access information on domestic and family violence orders and the management of child sex offenders, helping ensure risks to vulnerable individuals and the community are effectively managed.

The ACIC Bill establishes a clear data sovereignty model under which contributing agencies retain ownership of their data and determine the conditions for its access, use and disclosure, while the ACIC administers the relevant systems and applies contributor-defined controls. The agency does not own NPI data unless it is the originating contributor. These arrangements reinforce trust, jurisdictional confidence and clarity of responsibility, while enabling lawful, secure information-sharing to support operational decision making and community safety.

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These arrangements are supported by strengthened governance and oversight, including the establishment of the National Policing Information Committee (NPI Committee) by the ACIC Bill. The NPI Committee replaces the current ACIC Board's existing legislated role in relation to NPI and provides a formal mechanism for jurisdictional input, ministerial advice and accountability. Together, these measures ensure national information holdings will be managed securely, lawfully and for clearly defined purposes, including to support Australia's collective response to SOC.

National Police Checking Service

The ACIC Bill also confirms the ACIC's ongoing role in delivering NCCHC services through the National Police Checking Service (NPCS), including the regulation of accredited bodies. The NPCS provides a nationally consistent mechanism for accessing criminal history information across all Australian jurisdictions, supporting employment, licensing and regulatory decision making and strengthening integrity safeguards. It is a critical capability and an integral part of the agency's role in hardening the environment against SOC and criminal exploitation.

National Policing Information Charges Bill 2026

The NPI Charges Bill supports the ACIC Bill by establishing a clear, transparent legislative framework for the recovery of costs associated with the administration and maintenance of NPI systems. This aligns with the current arrangements whereby the ACIC charges for NCCHCs. These fees provide the revenue required to deliver, manage and maintain NPI systems. The NPI Charges Bill does not introduce a new charge.

The NPI Charges Bill is administrative and financial in nature. It does not alter the ACIC's intelligence functions, expand enforcement powers, or change the purposes for which information may be collected, accessed, used or disclosed. Nor does it affect the governance, access controls or contributor-defined conditions that apply to information held within NPI systems.

By continuing an explicit statutory basis for charging, the NPI Charges Bill supports the sustainability, reliability and integrity of nationally significant information systems, including NCCHC services and the continued operation of critical systems.

The NPI Charges Bill operates within existing governance and accountability frameworks. It neither diminishes oversight by the PJCIS or the IGIS, nor does it affect existing reporting, audit or review mechanisms. Taken together, the NPI Charges Bill complements the ACIC Bill by supporting the ongoing delivery of critical national information capabilities, without altering the ACIC's remit, intelligence mandate or safeguards.

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BENEFITS TO GOVERNMENT AND PARTNER AGENCIES

Beyond benefits to individual agencies, the ACIC Bill delivers a system-wide enhancement by enabling a more coordinated, intelligence-led response to SOC across Australia. By clarifying the ACIC's role, reducing duplication and improving the timeliness of intelligence sharing, the ACIC Bill supports earlier identification of emerging threats and more effective prioritisation across government, strengthening Australia's collective capacity to prevent, disrupt and respond to SOC before harm escalates.

Within a clearly defined and accountable framework, the ACIC Bill enables the ACIC to operate as an effective national criminal intelligence capability, strengthening coordination across Commonwealth, state and territory agencies and supporting intelligence, law enforcement, regulatory and policy partners without assuming enforcement functions. By modernising the agency's legislative settings, the ACIC Bill positions the ACIC as a force multiplier – providing unique, actionable and insightful intelligence that informs targeting, prioritisation and disruption by partners. Clearer information-sharing arrangements support better informed operational, regulatory and policy decision making across all levels of government.

These benefits are underpinned by strengthened oversight, clear purpose limitations and robust safeguards, ensuring the ACIC's powers are exercised at the right threshold, for the right purpose, and subject to appropriate external scrutiny. Overall, the ACIC Bill enhances Australia's collective capacity to counter SOC. The accompanying NPI Charges Bill supports these outcomes by ensuring the sustainable administration of nationally significant policing information systems.

Example: Clear national intelligence synthesis supports better government decision making

An emerging SOC threat prompts increased demand for strategic advice to government. Multiple agencies, acting appropriately within their statutory responsibilities, produce strategic assessments focused on different aspects of the same threat, including operational impacts, border risks and policy implications. While each product adds value within its remit, the absence of clear legislative guidance on national level criminal intelligence synthesis results in decision makers receiving multiple, partially overlapping products without a consolidated national picture, making it harder to assess system-wide risk and prioritisation.

The ACIC Bill clarifies the ACIC's role as Australia's national criminal intelligence agency with responsibility for producing integrated, whole-of-system strategic criminal intelligence and advice for government. This role does not displace partner agencies' analytical functions, but complements them by providing a consolidated national synthesis that draws on existing agency reporting as well as the agency's own intelligence collection. The clearer articulation of this function supports more coherent advice to government while preserving agencies' ability to produce assessments aligned to their mandates.

Additionally, the ACIC Bill ensures the ACIC is equipped with powers with appropriate intelligence thresholds and purposes to truly distinguish its role and function from our national law enforcement agencies. This is critical to highlight and empower the agency's unique value proposition and ensure there are no gaps in Australia's collective response to SOC.

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OTHER MATTERS

Consequential and transitional amendments

The ACIC Bill will be supported by a separate package of consequential and transitional amendments – to be introduced in due course – to ensure the ACIC’s broader legislative framework operates coherently following passage of the ACIC Bill.

These consequential amendments will make necessary changes to related Commonwealth legislation to give full effect to the Government’s response to the ACIC Review. These amendments will not introduce new powers for the ACIC, but will ensure that existing powers – particularly those subject to thresholds and safeguards – appropriately reflect the agency’s refined intelligence remit. They will also ensure legislative consistency across Commonwealth statutes and ensure that ancillary legislative settings align with the agency’s clarified role as Australia’s national criminal intelligence agency.

Associated transitional provisions will support the effective implementation of the new framework by maintaining continuity of intelligence activities and providing operational certainty as the reforms take effect.

Operational certainty through to commencement

The ACIC Bill provides for commencement up to 18 months after Royal Assent, allowing the ACIC sufficient time to plan and implement the new framework in a controlled and orderly manner. This commencement period supports effective transition planning, workforce and systems readiness, updates to policies and procedures, and engagement with partners across jurisdictions, while avoiding unnecessary operational risk.

CONCLUSION

The ACIC Bill represents a measured and necessary evolution of the ACIC’s legislative framework in response to a fundamentally changed and escalating SOC environment. It ensures the agency can operate as a modern criminal intelligence agency – equipped with appropriate powers, able to be applied at the right threshold, and for a clearly defined intelligence purpose.

The ACIC Bill does not expand the ACIC’s remit or create new categories of powers. Instead, it modernises and simplifies existing arrangements, removes unnecessary complexity, and aligns functions, powers and safeguards with contemporary intelligence practice. In doing so, it strengthens the agency’s ability to fill national intelligence gaps, support partners as a force multiplier, and reduce duplication across the law enforcement and intelligence system.

These reforms are accompanied by strengthened oversight, clear purpose limitations and enhanced accountability, providing assurance that the ACIC’s intelligence activities will continue to be conducted lawfully, proportionately and under robust external scrutiny by the IGIS and the PJCIS.

The ACIC Bill represents a key step in implementing the ACIC Review and completing the transition to a modern, intelligence-focused legislative framework. It replaces an accumulated and increasingly

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complex architecture with a clear, sustainable model capable of adapting to future threat evolution without further piecemeal amendment.

Complementing these reforms, the NPI Charges Bill provides a transparent administrative framework to support the sustainable delivery of nationally significant policing information systems within existing governance and oversight arrangements.

For these reasons, the ACIC Bill is a necessary and timely reform that supports Australia's collective capacity to counter SOC, while maintaining public confidence and strong institutional safeguards. The ACIC strongly supports the passage of the ACIC Bill. The agency also supports the passage of the NPI Charges Bill as a complementary administrative measure.