

Summary of the pilot meeting between the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security and Civil Society Groups – 26 June 2019

Participants

On 26 June, the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS) convened a pilot meeting with representatives from a number of Civil Society Groups. The meeting was attended by the Inspector-General, senior staff from the IGIS office and representatives from the Joint Councils for Civil Liberties, the Human Rights Law Centre and the Law Council of Australia. These three groups were selected for the pilot meeting because they regularly make submissions to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security on a wide range of matters relating to Australian intelligence and security agencies. We envisage inviting other Civil Society Groups to future meetings, including those specialising in a topic to be discussed at a particular meeting.

Prior to the meeting all participants were given a copy of the article by Frankin & King (2018) *Strategies for Engagement for Civil Society Groups and Intelligence Oversight Bodies*. The article provides useful insights for productive engagement between oversight bodies and Civil Society Groups.

Purpose

The purpose of the pilot meeting was to discuss whether a forum such as this would be useful for all the parties involved. The consensus was that it would be useful. In particular it could:

- give Civil Society Groups access to relevant and credible unclassified information about the work of the IGIS and Australia's intelligence and security agencies;
- give the IGIS an opportunity to understand the views of those who work with people directly affected by the work of intelligence or security agencies;
- provide a forum for discussion of differing perspectives about issues relevant to the work of the IGIS in overseeing Australia's intelligence and security agencies;
- potentially allow for discussion of legal and technical issues, for example with Civil Society Groups which have expertise in telecommunications technology.

Participants at the meeting accepted that:

- the IGIS could share only unclassified information;
- meetings would operate under 'Chatham House Rules' and that a short summary of meetings would be published on the IGIS website;
- There is significant benefit for all in sharing and understanding their different views. The purpose of the meeting is understanding; it is not necessary that there be a consensus on an issue.

Topics Discussed

In addition to discussing the utility and framework for meetings of this type the Inspector-General and her staff provided an overview of the work of the IGIS. This included the type of oversight that IGIS provides, the balance between inspections and inquiries, complaint statistics and the general nature of complaints received by the IGIS and the staffing profile of the office.

The group also discussed potential topics for future meetings. Suggestions included: voluntary interviews and metadata and data retention laws.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held following the release of the IGIS Annual Report (expected in October 2019).