

Investigations will be better informed

The AFP is at the forefront of introducing new information-sharing networks to strengthen the whole-of-government approach to national security.

Painstaking investigation and analysis in Australia and overseas have many times been key to thwarting plans drawn up by terrorists aiming to cause maximum destruction. Those few plans which are implemented, such as the bombings in Bali and the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001, are a cruel reminder that the ability to piece together seemingly irrelevant scraps of information has never been more crucial. Yet ensuring that those who need to know can find relevant information still poses significant difficulties despite the ability of modern computer systems to store and sort masses of data.

In its inaugural National Security Statement, the Australian government broadened the national security sector to include areas such as law enforcement and border protection in addition to the more traditional intelligence community. This widening of the national security community, as well as the changing national security environment and the AFP's expanded national and international role in fighting crime, has made the efficient and secure transfer of classified information more important than ever.

The AFP is developing additional ways of enabling investigators and others who need classified information to readily access it at the time that it can most benefit their inquiries. The Intelligence Strategic Program (ISP) has been established to deliver the AFP's

Secret and Top Secret information storage and retrieval networks. Manager ISP Eamonn Rooney said the program would enable AFP members to share classified information more easily and quickly in purpose-built secure environments.

"The ISP will increase the AFP's connectivity both within the organisation and with other agencies involved in national security," Mr Rooney said.

"Many more investigators will have the capability to access and to exchange information that is classified Secret or Top Secret. People will now have more access to classified information and will be able to collaborate as they need to during investigations."

In Australia, as in many nations, the risk that classified information could fall into enemy hands has led to the development of systems to protect it that depend on document tracking systems, access in controlled environments and hand-carrying of information from one office to another. While these systems have been superseded as information technology has improved, many remain labour-intensive and time-consuming. Some systems still depend on people knowing specific information exists so access can be requested which may, at times, hinder collaboration among investigators and analysts who are unable to search classified databases held elsewhere.

Once the ISP is fully implemented, investigators will be able to use a secure gateway on desktop computers to communicate with each other and with other agencies involved in national security. The AFP's new headquarters in the Edmund Barton Building in Canberra will provide desktop access for investigators and staff to seek and receive certain classified or sensitive information.

"In this regard, ISP is delivering the foundation on which even more sophisticated capabilities are likely to be built in the future," Mr Rooney said.

"The ISP will increase operational efficiency and effectiveness. People will have the information they need when they need it."

"The broadening of our concept of national security has introduced a cultural shift to emphasise exchange of information, but this must occur in an environment which ensures the information remains protected. Therefore, we are developing systems to increase information exchange without diminishing information security. Under the new system, information will be more secure as it can be exchanged without the risks attached to carrying: it never leaves the secure environment."

The ISP will enable instant secure communication via the common secure network among investigators and also provide a means by which sensitive and classified information can be shared. It will also deliver

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secure voice communication, enabling investigators to telephone colleagues and share information.

Secure vaults where classified information and sensitive can be accessed are being constructed in AFP regional offices to ensure that investigators have access within close proximity, rather than interstate, as is the case at the moment for some investigators.

"It's the first step in increasing information sharing and collaboration among investigators and other staff members, leading to better informed investigations," Mr Rooney said.

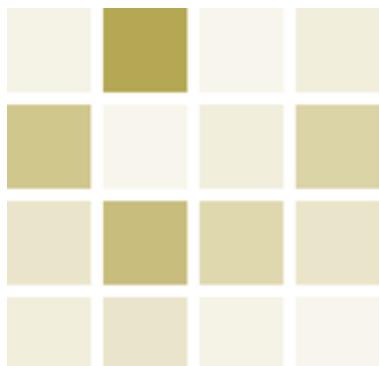
"This is the beginning of a long-term enhancement in the way we handle classified and sensitive information.

"We expect new information management software and tools to be created and delivered over coming years through the national security community."



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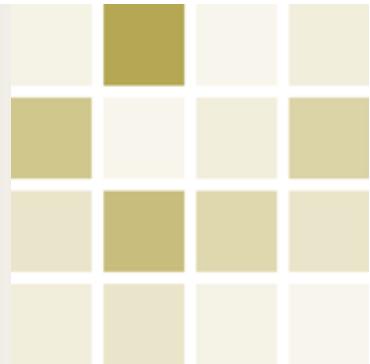
Road mapped to sharing



Improving our ability to share information is an important step towards strengthening Australia's national security, according to National Security Chief Information Officer, Rachel Noble.

Ms Noble says the AFP's Intelligence Strategic Program shows the organisation has embraced the key principles on information sharing agreed by the many stakeholders now involved in securing the nation.

This is consistent with the Prime Minister's inaugural National Security Statement delivered in December 2008 which highlighted that the increasingly complex and interconnected



security environment demanded a more integrated national security community across a broader range of organisations.

At the same time, the government established the new positions of National Security Adviser and National Security Chief Information Officer (NSCIO). Duncan Lewis AO was appointed as the first National Security Adviser in December 2008 and Ms Noble was appointed as NSCIO in April 2009.

She says that to get the best national security outcomes, the information environment must deliver the right information to the right people at the right time so they can make the best possible decisions and formulate the best possible policy response in times of crisis. Easier access to information and the input of a broader range of intelligence should also make analysis more efficient and timely, ultimately improving both policy development and national security outcomes.

The path to achieving these goals has been laid out in the National Security Roadmap and the implementation of this plan will transform the national security information environment by 2020.

One of the roadmap's key goals is to establish more effective interagency connectivity by making better use of existing capabilities such as network gateways which enable multiple networks from various agencies to talk to each other securely.

The national security community has also agreed to strong principles of governance in meeting roadmap objectives. These principles articulate the cultural and behavioral changes required in order to develop a more integrated national security. This includes, among others, an agreement not to build new networks when an existing capability already exists.

"That's where the AFP has made what I think is a very courageous decision to become early adopters of these principles," Ms Noble said.

"The AFP has moved their information environment in a way that others are still contemplating. The sort of things that the AFP have done which are extraordinary are that they have made a decision not to build their own network, even though they may have had the funding to do so, but to leverage off their national security partners to get a network faster and cheaper and, potentially, immediately allow information-sharing that they might have had to work a lot harder to achieve had they built their own network."

"Certainly, the AFP has been a leader, in my view, positioning itself in terms of the National Security Roadmap."

Ms Noble said no large injections of funding should be required in the short term as the roadmap's emphasis is on enabling wider access to existing information through opening gateways and changing policy, governance and business practices to promote secure exchange of classified information.

"Our dream is to have an environment where, for example in the AFP, your people can sit at one computer screen, they can see multiple security domains on the one piece of glass, where you could look across your Protected, your Secret and maybe your Top Secret environment, and be able to seamlessly email, share data, collaborate as analysts with any other member of Australia's national security community and with your State and Territory partners and, potentially, with your allied partners," Ms Noble said.

"That's the dream."