

Monday, 18 January 2021

Law Council welcomes appointment of Acting Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security

All comments by Law Council President, Dr Jacoba Brasch QC

“The Law Council of Australia welcomes Hon Dr Christopher Jessup QC commencement as Acting Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS). He brings important professional skills and experience to the role that is responsible with conducting independent operational oversight of the legality and propriety of agencies’ activities.

As a former Justice of the Federal Court of Australia (June 2006 to April 2017) and an experienced barrister, Dr Jessup’s experience and wealth of knowledge will be an asset to IGIS.

Dr Jessup has also served on the Law Council, including as the former Chair of its Federal Litigation and Dispute Resolution Section.

Dr Jessup’s appointment comes at a critical time for the National Intelligence Community and its oversight apparatus, given numerous major expansions to agencies’ powers and a large volume of legislation before the Parliament.

This includes legislation currently before the Parliament that aims to expand the oversight functions of the IGIS to cover the intelligence functions of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre and certain intelligence-collection activities of the Australian Federal Police.

The Law Council has a long history of constructive engagement with the Office of the IGIS and looks forward to working with Dr Jessup as Acting Inspector-General, pending finalisation of the necessary arrangements for his substantive appointment.

The IGIS represents global best practice in arrangements for the independent operational oversight of intelligence agencies. Consequently, the Law Council encourages the government to closely monitor the resources available to the Office of the IGIS, and to increase them whenever this is necessary to ensure that its critical oversight functions keep pace with expansions to agencies’ budgets and statutory powers.

The Law Council also acknowledges the service of the former IGIS, the Hon Margaret Stone AO, and the Deputy IGIS, Mr Jake Blight, who acted as IGIS from August 2020, both of whom successfully managed a major period of expansion for the Office of the IGIS, while maintaining a program of oversight of agency activities during an unprecedented public health pandemic.”

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