

# **Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee for intelligence and Security**

March 2006

## **1. Graduate Recruitment**

- a) Concerns have been expressed by agencies within the Australian Intelligence Community (AIC) that they are not attracting sufficient graduate candidates of high quality, despite individual agency recruitment programs targeting undergraduate and post-graduate students at universities.
- b) Individual agency recruitment programs vary significantly in terms of reach to and within universities. Each agency does not have direct reach to all universities, all campuses of a university, or all potential audiences within a university ie career counsellors, relevant academics and the students themselves.
- c) To improve reach to students in particular, the AIC (via ONA) is proposing to implement a program comprising on-campus public presentations about career opportunities within the AIC. Presentations are to be administered on campus by the university's career counsellors' office (ie provide a suitable venue, arrange local publicity).
- d) The AIC initiative, first proposed some 3 years ago, is a positive step towards raising greater awareness amongst students of a potential career within the AIC and its agencies.
- e) However, the above initiative is limited in scope as presently planned. The program could, and should, be developed to coordinate, on behalf of all AIC agencies, the reach of graduate recruitment activities to all universities and targeted audiences. Such a program would be significantly more efficient and effective in addressing those concerns in (a) above, than the combination of existing agency programs supplemented by the AIC initiative as currently proposed.
- f) An expanded AIC program would
  - consolidate in one location all relevant knowledge about promoting graduate recruitment at all Australian universities, and provide the resources and flexibility required to deliver a comprehensive, coordinated program:
  - promote the AIC as a broad career option generally, and identify individual career options offered by agencies within AIC
  - target all universities – there are some 39 universities around Australia, most with more than one campus.
  - arrange briefings of most, potentially all, career counsellors at each university: conduct briefings at their university office, at various career counsellor conferences, including the annual conference of their national body ie The National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS)
  - coordinate participation in Career Days at universities

- arrange 'career awareness' briefings of academics as appropriate. Briefings to cover selected academics within faculty groups of interest at each university eg arts, economics, law, science
  - arrange public presentations to students: frequency at each university to be determined eg annually, every 2 years etc (will require concurrent 'roadshow' presentations). Presentations to be coordinated, where practical, with agency twice-yearly recruitment drives.
  - potentially, incorporate tailored presentations as part of selected faculty programs (many universities now offer courses on intelligence and security matters).
  - arrange the distribution of publicity material (posters, brochures, career advice handbooks, other promotional material) to career counsellors' offices, individual faculties/departments, and other university organisations of potential interest eg university regiments, university colleges, law students association etc
  - provide, via the program centre, a one-stop-shop for contact by universities/academics etc with the AIC on graduate recruitment promotion/support matters.
- g) the program would not preclude separate contact on recruiting matters by individual agencies with any of the targeted audiences.
- h) Other advantages: Besides directly targeting graduate recruitment, such a program would provide an opportunity to explain to a broad body of academics and students the roles and responsibilities of the AIC and agencies within, and the checks and oversight mechanisms applied by government. For most, this would be enlightening and reassuring, and benefit the national interest generally.
- i) **Recommendation.** The proposed AIC program be developed to the above profile in future.

## **2. Career Development & Retention**

- a) As a matter of policy and practice, professional officers within the AIC agencies, especially at SES level, should receive similar career development and advancement opportunities, as their APS counterparts. Generally, those in non-Defence agencies do not receive all such opportunities at present.
- b) Such development would significantly benefit the interests of the officers themselves, their agency and AIC generally. The benefits would result from an increase in managerial skills and competence, increased flexibility of deployment, greater career satisfaction, and potentially, a greater retention rate within their agency or the AIC.
- c) Such development should also increase the future re-availability of those officers who might separate from the AIC during their working career, through their willingness to return to the AIC (this becoming seen as a positive career move; same or different agency)

- d) It would also increase the opportunity for those officers to 'qualify' for and compete on equal merit with 'outsiders' for head-of-agency appointments. Some insider critics of outsider appointments often overlook key elements of government selection criteria for such appointments, and their need to meet these.
- e) Career development for selected officers should include access to the full package of SES leadership development opportunities offered by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). They include, potentially, attendance on senior courses at the Australian Defence College or similar foreign colleges, academic courses and attachments, rotation within the AIC, and most importantly, a senior policy appointment in government, ideally outside the AIC. The latter would provide the opportunity to gain experience and demonstrate competence in the development and management of policy at a senior level, an important consideration of government in the selection of agency heads.
- f) Additional important benefits from such external courses/attachments are broadening the mind outside the confines of their agency and the AIC, and the valuable networking opportunities.
- g) Two arguments in particular have been raised against providing such opportunities, particularly in non-Defence agencies (members of Defence agencies are, generally, either members of the APS or military, with access to respective career development opportunities offered by both).
- the officers are not members of/serving in the APS and should accept any relative career limitations associated with agency employment.
  - the agency cannot afford to lose senior experienced officers for such long periods for general (as opposed to specialist) career development. Also, outside attachments of the kind above might tempt them to leave.
    - The former is a diminishing argument as the old-guard move on. The latter is more understandable given shortages of experienced senior staff. But both arguments are self-defeating. Such practice results in neither the agency, nor AIC, getting the value of more highly trained and competent staff. It also ignores the reality that today the agencies are competing for high quality recruits amongst the same pool as the APS. Generally, potential agency recruits have similar career demands/expectations as their APS counterparts. If these do not materialise, particularly amongst those with the best potential, they will leave. Also, some of those who leave are disaffected because of these issues, which can (and does) impact on their willingness to return, and the willingness of their agency to want or seek their return.
- h) **Recommendation.** Staff planning, practices and budgeting must be programed to rectify deficiencies in career development and retention, within and across AIC agencies.

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