CORPORATE PLAN
2016–2020

ASPI

AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE

What is ASPI?

ASPI is an independent think tank concerned with national strategic, defence and security issues. It was established by an Australian Government cabinet decision in 2001 to provide an alternative and contestable source of policy advice, operating independently and with a focus on policy-relevant research.

It is a proprietary limited company wholly owned by the Australian Government and governed by the ASPI Council, which is responsible for setting the strategic direction for the institute.

ASPI Council members are appointed by the government and include a nominee of the Leader of the Opposition to reinforce the non-partisan nature of ASPI's work.

Successive Australian governments have continued to support ASPI's role as a strategic policy research centre, to better inform government decisions and the public understanding of national strategic, defence and security issues.

Operating environment

As an independent and non-partisan think tank, ASPI is unique in Australia. While a number of other think tanks operate in the strategic policy and national interest sphere, our positioning as a trusted but independent organisation with close connections to government and other key stakeholders, such as the Australian Parliament, the Australian Public Service, the media and industry, means we are well placed for success. ASPI attracts highly credentialed and respected staff, but must continue to compete with other organisations that operate in similar subject areas.

ASPI places a premium on the production of high-quality and policy-relevant product, often driven by customer demands. Our reputation for the quality, independence and timeliness of our advice is critical for ASPI's future existence.

Staff and Visiting Fellows do most of ASPI's research and analysis. However, we also contract with other experts in their fields to undertake research or prepare publications on particular topics. Contributions to our blog, *The Strategist*, come from a range of authors, including staff and Fellows.

Risks and governance

The two most significant risks facing ASPI are that its independence and non-partisan approach is called into question or that the quality of its research and analysis diminishes. The manifestation of either risk may lead to a loss of confidence in our work. If that were to happen, Australian Government departments and agencies might decide to withdraw or significantly reduce our funding.

ASPI has in place stringent editorial and communication processes and procedures to monitor what staff are saying publicly, as well as rigorous editorial checking of pieces posted on *The Strategist*. Our Research Ethics Policy guides the manner in which research is to be conducted within ASPI, and research contributors are required to conduct research in a way that meets our high standards.

We also make sure that sponsors and potential sponsors are aware that sponsorship agreements with ASPI will in no way sway our independent view on any given project, procurement or policy. This position is written into all sponsorship contracts.

The ASPI Council and the independent Audit Committee are responsible for ensuring that a range of policies and tools are developed, implemented and regularly reviewed so that the institute is soundly governed. ASPI's approach to managing risk draws on a range of legislation, policies and guidance on risk management. The most significant piece of governance legislation is the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. This Corporate Plan has been prepared under section 95(1) of that Act.

Funding

A substantial part of ASPI's funding is provided by the Department of Defence. This funding now accounts for around 50% of our total income and is used to contribute to mutually agreed Defence-specific projects. A new three-year funding agreement commenced in 2015–16.

With the growth of ASPI's areas of research and policy interest, most of our work on emerging national security issues is funded through agreements with other Australian Government entities or private-sector partners. Those entities contribute to research programs or commission specific research projects. Additional income is also received through events, from ASPI supporters and as interest on retained funds.

There has been steady growth in overall income since the establishment of ASPI. With the expansion of national security research areas covered by the institute, we expect that the core funding provided by the Department of Defence will remain relatively constant in dollar terms. We will continue to seek partnership and sponsorship funding to develop policy-relevant research across a broader range of national security issues. Funding for those areas is expected to continue to increase during 2016–17, further reducing the overall percentage of income provided by the department.

Staffing

With the growth in ASPI, including the creation of new program areas, a new organisational structure was implemented late in 2015. Research staff conduct their work in program areas that belong to one of two overarching themes: Defence and Strategy, reflecting the traditional core work of ASPI, and National Security Programs, focusing on the evolving national security environment. A Corporate Services team provides support for ASPI operations in the areas of governance, finance, human resources, events and training, underpinned by information and communication technologies.

ASPI employs around 40 full- and part-time staff, including a substantial number of people with PhDs and other postgraduate qualifications and individuals with extensive senior experience in policy analysis in Australia and overseas.

In addition, we have appointed a number of Visiting Fellows—individuals with long and distinguished careers who produce a range of written analyses, contribute to ASPI program areas and provide mentoring for staff.

After growth in staff numbers in the previous year, it is expected that 2016–17 will be a year more of consolidation than growth, so no significant increases in staff numbers are expected. ASPI will continue to host international Visiting Fellows and encourage staff to undertake overseas fellowships.

On defence and national security issues, ASPI will:	ASPI will measure its achievement by:
conduct and publish research	• the number and type of publications and blog posts produced by ASPI, together with examples of how the publications have contributed to the national debate
provide an alternative source of strategic policy ideas and advice	• participation in government advisory committees and expert panels • submissions to parliamentary inquiries
stimulate public discussion	• number and range of ASPI public events • published opinion pieces • examples of media coverage contributing to the national debate • website, blog and social media usage
promote international understanding	• ranking in University of Pennsylvania's Global Go To Think Tank Index • invitations to speak at international conferences • links with overseas think tanks • international Visiting Fellowships • participation in and hosting of international dialogues
develop expertise	• number of interns whom ASPI supports • published pieces by interns • participants in ASPI—Education courses

Research program areas

ASPI research staff operate in program areas that belong to either the Defence and Strategy Program or the National Security Programs.

While each program area plans for the work to be done throughout the year, ASPI's product must also be relevant and timely. Therefore, some of our work is done in direct response to national and international events, such as terrorist attacks.

Defence and Strategy Program

Defence Strategy & Capability Program

The Defence and Strategy Program analyses the interplay between wider strategic trends and the role of military force, including:
- how changing power relativities affect military affairs
- the role of conventional and nuclear weapons in the 21st century
- the strategic impact of economic, demographic and other trends.

It also analyses the capability of the ADF through all stages of the capability life cycle. This includes:
- identifying requirements for future capability
- analysing competing options for materiel solutions

- tracking the progress of projects in the Integrated Investment Program
- exploring issues related to ADF personnel matters, including recruitment, retention and training
- assessing ADF capability against regional militaries.

The program also analyses and assesses Australia's defence budgets and the wider range of activities required to produce and support the ADF's capabilities. This includes:
- defence funding over both the short and the long term
- policies and capabilities of the defence industry
- project management strategies
- defence economic trends, especially as they apply to materiel.

International Program

Australia's Defence White Paper 2016 emphasised the importance of a rules-based global order to support the nation's defence and security interests. ASPI's International Program explores some of the challenges in maintaining international peace and security, both as they relate to Australia's direct engagement and as they contribute to broader international research on multilateral security issues.

The International Program has three main aims:
- Deepen understanding within Australia and internationally of global security issues and multilateral peace operations.
- Facilitate engagement among key stakeholders in government, the private sector and civil society on issues relating to international peace and security.
- Provide policy advice on emerging challenges and opportunities for Australia to contribute to efforts to maintain international peace and security.

National Security Programs

Five interlinked programs combine to provide comprehensive coverage of national security issues. A modern approach to national security must be designed to respond to major security issues as they affect citizens, rather than just the institutions of the state.

International Cyber Policy Centre

ASPI's International Cyber Policy Centre (ICPC) focuses on the growing importance of cyber-related issues for broader strategic policy. ICPC brings together the various Australian Government agencies with responsibility for cyber issues, along with a range of private-sector partners and creative thinkers, to help Australia create constructive cyber policies for application at home and abroad.

We aim to facilitate conversations between governments, the private sector and academia across the Asia–Pacific region to increase constructive dialogue on cyber issues and do our part to create a common understanding of problems and possible solutions in cyberspace.

Counter-Terrorism Policy Centre

ASPI's Counter-Terrorism Policy Centre (CTPC) was established in late 2015. Policymakers' focus on the threats posed by terrorism and effective means to counter those threats has sharpened markedly in the past 15 years. The terrorist threat to Australia has diversified and become more complex compared to the situation a decade ago.

As young people from Australia and other Western states are being drawn into Islamist groups and right-wing extremism, governments are struggling to keep pace with the changing threat landscape, to manage the risks and to develop responses. Counterterrorism efforts constitute an important subset of Australian strategic policy.

Risk and Resilience Program

Resilience is increasingly seen as central to broad strategic policy in public- and private-sector organisations and, importantly, at the whole-of-economy level. As both concept and practice, it's closely aligned with notions of vulnerability and risk assessment.

ASPI's Risk and Resilience Program includes consideration of resilience in communities, local governments and regions, as well as at the state and national levels. The program also covers all hazards, infrastructure resilience and opportunities for Australia to contribute to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Asia–Pacific.

Strategic Policing and Law Enforcement Program

ASPI's Strategic Policing and Law Enforcement Program examines the contribution of law enforcement to national security and to broader strategic policy. The main products of the program include analysis and policy recommendations.

The program has three main aims:
- Understand the link between law enforcement issues and national security concerns.
- Explain the contribution of law enforcement agencies to Australian's international strategic objectives.
- Help law enforcement agencies position themselves for the future.

Border Security Program

ASPI's Border Security Program provides independent, policy-relevant research and analysis to better inform government decisions and public understanding on border security. Its research focuses on issues relevant to managing the border continuum to help to support and facilitate legitimate trade and travel and protect the Australian community from a range of border risks.

The program has four objectives:
- Lift the level of Australian and regional understanding and dialogue on border security.
- Create a space and forum for the development of high-quality public policy on border security related issues.
- Provide a means for developing Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogue on border security.
- Create a sustained dialogue between the private and public sectors on border security.

ASPI—Education

ASPI—Education is a new initiative that builds on our established expertise and recent experience. ASPI—Education will focus on enhancing course participants' judgement and will employ experiential and authentic educational methods to do so. Initial programs will include the established Better Policy Program and Defence Graduates Seminar and new programs focused on thinking skills and strategy.