

**A S P I**

**AUSTRALIAN  
STRATEGIC  
POLICY  
INSTITUTE**

**2019–2023**

**CORPORATE PLAN**

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## Introduction

This 2019-2023 Corporate Plan has been prepared under section 95(1) of the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and covers the period 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2023.

ASPI's Corporate Plan 2019-2023 summarises the institute's strategy and objectives and includes an analysis of future business opportunities, corporate performance, requirements and risks.

## About ASPI

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

Since its inception, the institute has developed into one of the leading independent policy research bodies in Australia. ASPI is unique in the scope of its research, capacity, expertise and ability to independently engage across official and public domains. The institute is recognised nationally and internationally for its significant contributions to policy debates.

ASPI is a company limited by guarantee 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 Minister for Defence and include a nominee of the Leader of the Opposition to reinforce the non-partisan nature of ASPI's work.

## Purpose

ASPI's objective is to function as a strategic policy research centre, independent of government, providing policy-relevant research and analysis to better inform government decisions and public understanding of strategic and defence issues.

It has four specific purposes:

- conducting and publishing research on issues related to Australia's strategic and defence policy choices
- preparing policy inputs on strategic and defence issues to government, as requested by government, subject to funding
- conducting a program of activities to increase understanding of strategic and defence policy issues among Australians, and to encourage the development of expertise in topics relevant to Australia's strategic and defence policy choices
- promoting international understanding of Australia's strategic and defence policy perspectives.

## Strategic aim

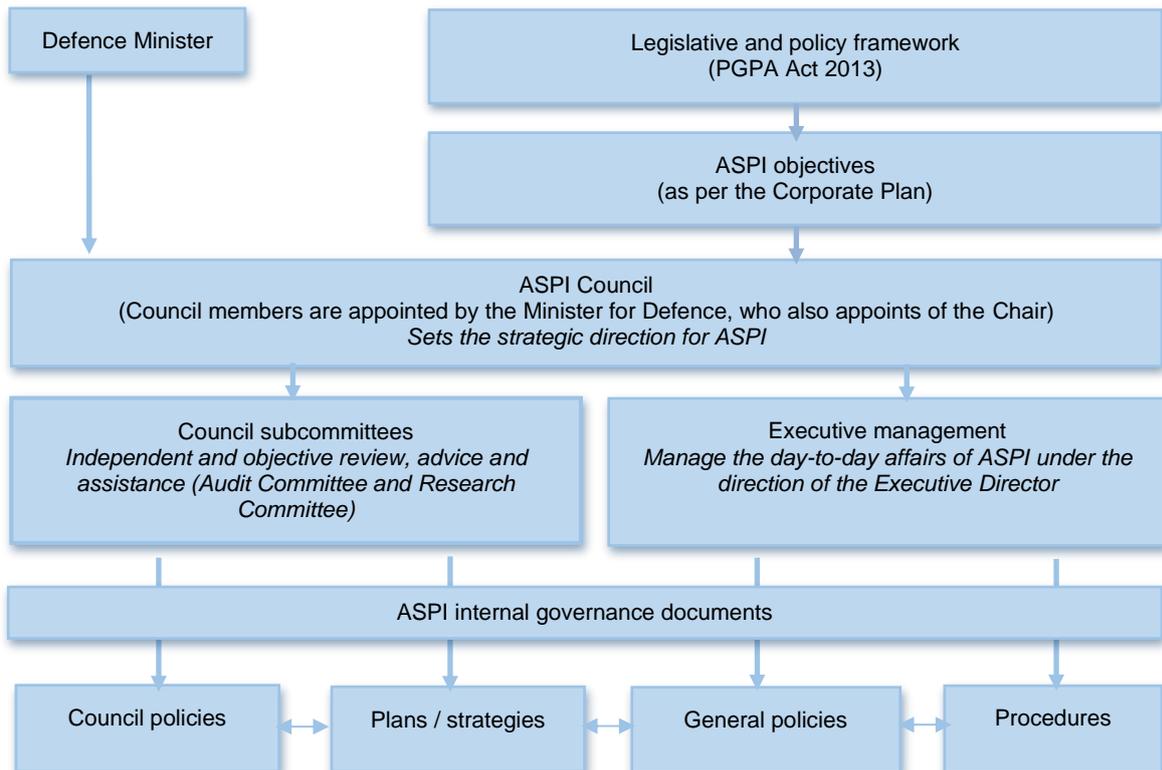
ASPI's strategic aim is to build upon our recognition as Australia's number one strategic defence, national security and policy research institute. To achieve this, we will:

- maintain our excellence for delivering world-class, independent, innovative and relevant security policy analysis of defence and strategic policy issues

- strengthen our capacity to communicate our work to a wide range of audiences
- provide leadership and ideas to key groups with interests in our work
- grow ASPI's capacity with additional funding, people and activities
- be an employer of choice for smart and ambitious strategic policy professionals

## Governance framework

The ASPI Council and its subcommittees 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 governance structure is shown below.



## Staffing

ASPI employs around 55 full-time 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.

Research staff conduct their work in one of two overarching themes: Defence, Strategy and Capability Programs, reflecting the traditional core work of ASPI, and National Security Programs, focusing on the evolving national security environment. Our 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.

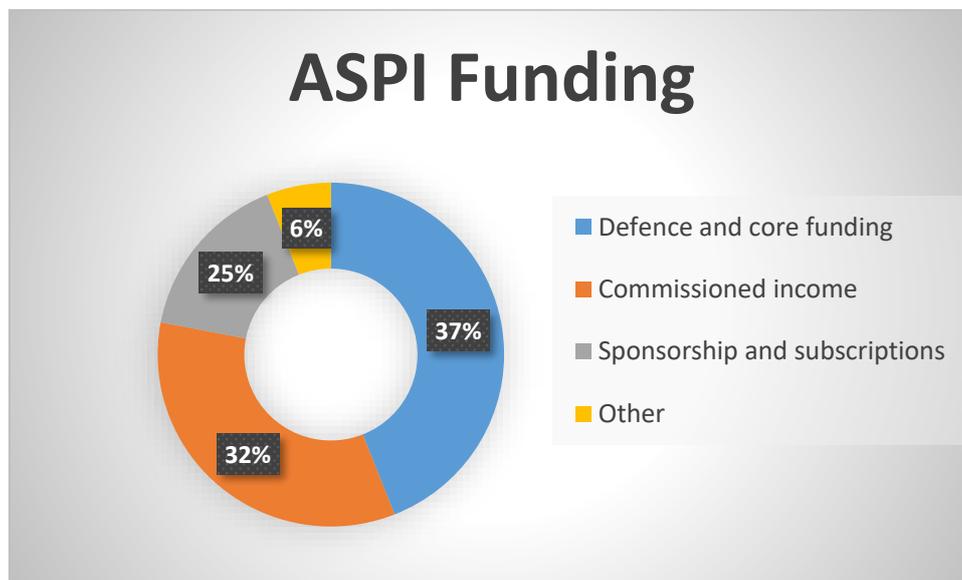
In addition, ASPI has appointed a number of Visiting Fellows—individuals with long and distinguished careers who produce a range of written analyses, contribute to ASPI program areas and provide mentoring for staff.

ASPI will continue to host international Visiting Fellows and encourage staff to undertake overseas fellowships.

## Funding

Government funding, through our funding agreement with the Department of Defence, remains the key enabler of ASPI's operations and accounts for almost 37% of ASPI's total income. A five-year funding agreement with Department of Defence commenced in FY2018-19 and will end FY2022-23.

This funding covers much of our operating costs and those elements of the research program (on specific mutually agreed projects) and events program that are defined in the funding agreement.



ASPI is committed to securing a financial foundation for growth by seeking new partnerships and long-term sponsorship funding to develop policy-relevant research across a broader range of national security issues. As an example, ASPI aims to establish a Centre for Strategy and Critical Technology and will look for additional funding opportunities to support the Centre.

## 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, ASPI's 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 it is 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.

We place a premium on the production of high-quality and policy-relevant research, often driven by customer demands. A strong reputation for quality, independence and timeliness of advice is critical for ASPI's future existence.

Staff and Visiting Fellows do most of ASPI's research and analysis. However, contracts are established with other experts in their fields to undertake research or prepare publications on particular topics. For example, contributions to *The Strategist*, come from a range of authors, including ASPI staff and Fellows.

## Risk oversight and management

The two most significant risks facing ASPI are that its independence and non-partisan approach are 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 funding.

ASPI has in place a stringent editorial and communication processes and procedures to monitor what staff are saying publicly, as well as a thorough evaluation process on what pieces are posted on *The Strategist* and in other ASPI publications. 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 does not compromise our high standards.

The ASPI Council and our 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*.

Our independence is demonstrated every day in the content of ASPI's research and public comment. The reality and perception of the institute's independence must be guarded, but it builds on a reputation for demonstrably meeting this requirement over the past 18 years.

## Performance objectives

A report on our performance against the objectives is tabled at the quarterly conducted Council meetings.

Over the past five years, ASPI has experienced significant growth. Revenues have increased from \$2.2 million in 2013–14 to \$5.3 million in 2018–19—an increase of 140%. This revenue excludes core funding from the Department of Defence, which has increased by only 8% over the four-year period.

We expect growth over the next four years at least as significant as we have had in the last four years and will achieve it through new sponsorship and program funding, as well as by expanding our commercial offering of training programs.

ASPI has identified five objectives and measures to be monitored during the period of this Corporate Plan.

### **Objective 1: Conducting research and publishing relevant outputs**

ASPI informs the public by publishing information and analysis on a full range of strategic, defence and nation security issues that bear on the choices facing Australia over coming years.

*Achievement measured by:*

- *number and type of publications and Strategist articles produced by ASPI, together with examples of how the publications have contributed to the national debate*
- *maintaining ASPI's excellence for delivering high quality, impactful and relevant security policy analysis of strategic, defence and national security issues*

ASPI produces documents in seven main formats:

- Strategy series
- Strategic Insights
- Special Reports
- Yearbook series (includes *The cost of Defence*, *Cyber maturity in the Asia–Pacific region* and the *Counterterrorism yearbook*)
- Cyber series (introduced in 2016–17)
- ASPI Case Studies series
- Strategist Selection

The institute produces a wide range of publications dealing with the spectrum of strategic and defence policy challenges and wider national security issues. The range continues to grow: the number of published titles has increased by 31% since 2013–14.

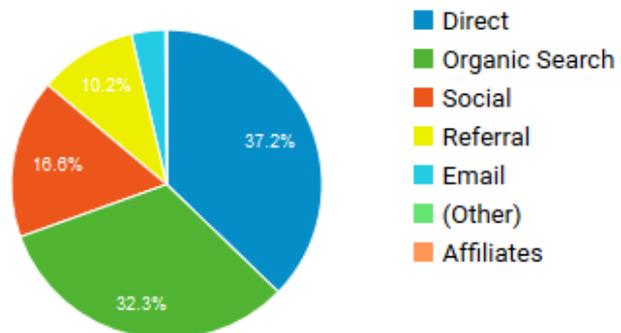
ASPI also occasionally produces discussion papers for distribution within the policy community. These reports usually deal with near-term planning and management issues and discuss options, often including some not previously considered by officials.

Previously the ASPI Corporate plan has focused on the total cumulative number of downloads of our publications as PDF documents as a key performance metric. For many years, this has been a valid measurement of the consumption of our analysis, but that is changing.

In addition to traditional PDF downloads, we now publish a range of ‘mid-length’ analysis pieces that are formatted to be read online using desktop PCs, phones, mobile devices and tablets. The online readership of these new format reports has been included in this financial year’s total of 602,722 downloads and reads.

ASPI continues to enjoy a substantial presence in the media landscape through *The Strategist*, which allows the institute to comment on contemporary issues in a way that is consistent with its reputation for considered analysis. *The Strategist* covers all of the major areas of our research interests. *The Strategist* routinely attracts over 20,000 user sessions per week. Of these visitors, roughly a third are coming to the site via web searches, a third from direct links (bookmarks etc) and the remaining third from a mix of Social Media posts, links from 3<sup>rd</sup> party sites and our daily and weekly eMail subscriptions.

ASPI staff also publish extensively outside of our own products, in academic and trade journals and newspapers.



## **Objective 2: Provide government with an alternative source of strategic policy ideas and advice**

ASPI is a source of new ideas and innovative solutions for Government, both through our published work, and through policy analyses specifically commissioned by Government.

*Achievement measured by:*

- *participation in government advisory committees and expert panels*
- *submissions to parliamentary inquiries*
- *reacting to government and industry demands.*

ASPI's contribution to government policy thinking occurs formally at many different levels. More informally, our senior staff engage frequently in meetings with parliamentarians and senior bureaucrats to discuss a range of policy options. Recognised for their expertise, ASPI staff have been invited to participate in a number of government advisory committees and expert panels.

While the core funding for defence work comes from the Department of Defence, funds from other government entities have grown significantly over the past five years. This has allowed ASPI to expand the national security program areas of research, to undertake specific training programs, and to deliver contracted research and analysis.

## **Objective 3: Stimulate public discussion on key aspects of defence and security policy**

ASPI is one of the most authoritative and widely quoted contributors to public discussion, prompting debate on strategic policy issues in Australia.

ASPI informs the public by hosting several events year open to the public and through readily accessible online material on ASPI's website including opinion pieces, reports, podcasts and the Strategist.

*Achievement measured by:*

- *number and range of ASPI public events*
- *published opinion pieces*
- *media coverage by ASPI experts contributing to the national debate*
- *website, blog and social media usage.*

ASPI will continue to deliver a wide range of events with guest speakers, bilateral dialogues and roundtable discussions attended by Australian and international participants. Together, these events make an active and valuable contribution to discussions about defence and national security issues in Australia.

ASPI continues to play an important role in the media as part of our strategy for encouraging and informing public debate by publishing comment and analysis by ASPI staff in national and international newspapers.

ASPI staff are contacted to provide comments or be interviewed for radio or television across the full range of research program areas. This amounts to hundreds of interviews each year and reflects the

standing that ASPI has established with the media as a credible and reliable source of information on what are often very complex issues.

In addition to the website and *The Strategist*, ASPI employs a number of different tools to ensure that research results and analysis are communicated to a broader audience.

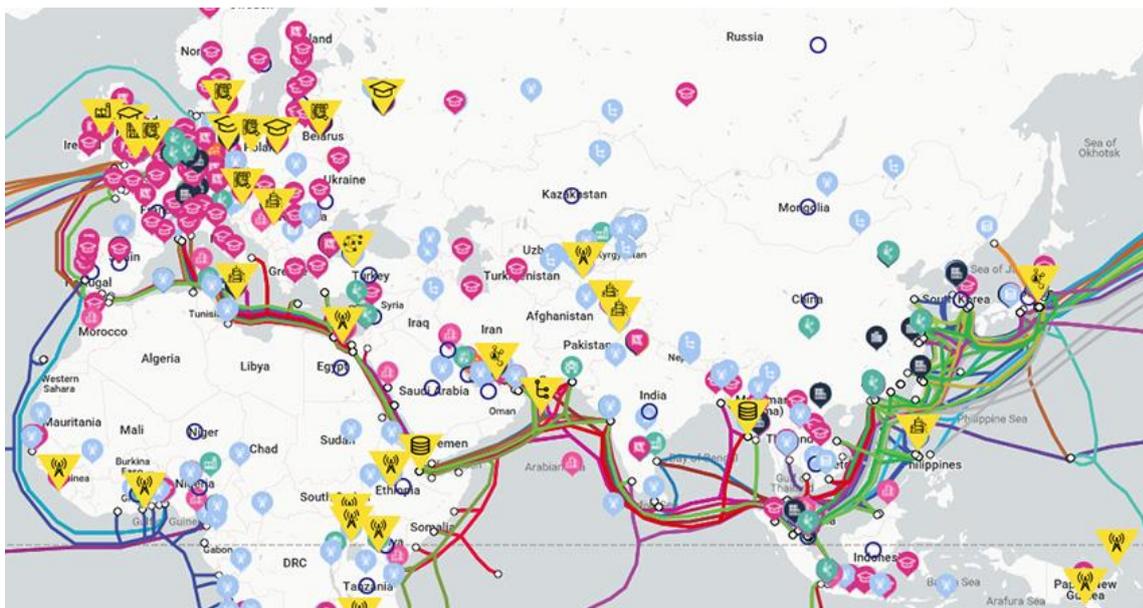
### Web activity

As the main output channel for our research and publications, user growth to the ASPI 'main' site and *The Strategist*, blog remains strong.

Annual user visits (sessions) to the [aspi.org.au](http://aspi.org.au) site grew from **202k** in 2016–17 to **355k** in 2018–2019. While over the same period, user visits to *The Strategist* also increased strongly from **971k** in 2017–18 to **1,658k** 2018–19. We are also publishing specific online tools highlighting particular research efforts, for example the *China Tech Map* site which tracks the growth of Chinese Technology companies and was launched in April this year has already attracted over **10k** user sessions in the last quarter.

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## Mapping China's tech giants



ASPI's International Cyber Policy Centre



# SOCIAL MEDIA



- 30% increase from previous financial year
- Promote new pieces from *The Strategist*
- Used to live-tweet ASPI public events
- Promotes articles and research by ASPI staff
- Direct engagement with field influencers

- 11% increase from previous financial year
- Key social media platform for communicating information about ASPI
- Post events, articles, images and native digital content



- 10,300 followers at the end of 2018-19 financial year
- Promotes opinion pieces and research from ASPI staff
- Promotes job opportunities

- Australian views make up 47.2% of audience
- Watch time in minutes for year increased by 14% with an average view duration of 5m:19s
- Total subscriber numbers increased by 46%



ASPI is implementing a more considered management of its social media platforms. Each platform has a unique strategy to communicate ASPI's brand and reputation as Australia's premier think tank

## Social media

ASPI uses Twitter to inform followers of newly released pieces from *The Strategist*, reports and articles related to defence and strategic policy, as well as to alert audiences to ASPI events and developments. We also 'live tweet' updates, images and quotes to Australian and international followers in near real time during ASPI public events. Twitter followers stood at 23100 at the end of 2018–19, which was a substantial increase of 30% from the previous financial year.

Facebook remains the key mechanism for ASPI to upload information about itself, including notifications on internship opportunities, images and videos, event updates and news. It continues to be the social medium of choice, producing a 14% increase in followers since 2017–18.

## YouTube

Videos featuring leading strategic thinkers from Australia and abroad, as well as videos of speeches recorded at ASPI functions, are featured on the ASPI YouTube channel. ASPI's YouTube channel continues to attract an increasing viewership from across the globe. Australian views are naturally the most prominent making up 47.2% of our audience, followed by the USA (9.4%) and Indonesia (3.5%). Our watch time (minutes) for the year has increased by 14% and total subscriber numbers have increased by 46%. With the advances in video technology however YouTube isn't the only streaming video channel available and we have been publishing selected videos to Twitter and Facebook. These channels prefer for more concise material so our video format is evolving to match the requirements of these emerging outlets.

## Soundcloud

ASPI launched its Policy, Guns and Money Podcast in August 2018. To date ASPI has produced 19 regular episodes and nine special episodes with a combined 36,000 listens on Soundcloud.

## **Objective 4: Promote international understanding**

ASPI strengthens links with overseas think tanks to inform the international community of Australia's strategic and defence policy perspectives.

*Achievement measured by:*

- *ranking in University of Pennsylvania's Global Go To Think Tank Index*
- *accepted invitations to speak at prestigious international conferences*
- *links with overseas think tanks*
- *participation in and hosting of international dialogues.*

ASPI's standing as a respected source of analysis is recognised both internationally and domestically, and can be measured by our international ranking in a global index of think tanks. We are currently ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the 'Top defence and national security think tanks' in the University of Pennsylvania's 2018 Global Go To Think Tank Index. This makes ASPI the highest ranked defence and national security think tank in Australia.

ASPI has been regularly selected by Government to lead on Track 1.5 strategic dialogues with international institutions and government partners on a regular basis. ASPI actively seeks new opportunities with counterpart think tanks to strengthen links through exchanges and fellowships. ASPI's expert analysts are regularly invited to speak at international conferences.

## **Objective 5: Develop expertise**

ASPI is committed to fostering the next generation of strategic policy thinkers and continues to play an active role in professional development for government clients.

*Achievement measured by:*

- *number of interns whom ASPI supports*
- *published pieces by interns*
- *participants in ASPI Education courses*

Our paid internship program gives recent graduates the opportunity to contribute to ASPI research projects and also to conduct their own research projects for future publication either by ASPI or independently. Through attending many of ASPI's events, the interns make contact with senior officials, researchers and diplomats from Canberra and elsewhere as they begin to form professional networks for their strategic policy careers.

ASPI continues to play an active role in professional development for government clients, particularly the Department of Defence. This includes the Better Policy program, attended by APS and Executive level staff and, separately, SES staff and the Defence Graduates Seminar Program and the History of Australia's Foreign Policy course, in which Defence participants attend a two-week program focusing on the strategic issues facing Australia.

The intention is to expand the training program using the success of the current platform to introduce additional training courses over the next four years.

## Women in Defence and Security Network (WDSN)



Established in October 2014, the WDSN's primary aim is to provide a forum to support the career development of women in the defence and security community in Australia, and to facilitate critical discussion around issues related to women's participation and gender perspectives in the context of defence, national security and foreign policy.

The importance of female participation and leadership in the defence and security sector has been recognised across government and the private sector. The 2016 Defence White Paper recognised that 'Gender equality and increasing female participation in the Defence workforce

and in senior leadership roles is fundamental to achieving Defence capability now and into the future'. Similarly, DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (2016) 'defines gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority in Australia's foreign policy, economic diplomacy and development program'. And private sector leaders have increasingly recognised the importance of women's leadership and participation as essential to the success of their businesses.

Interest in WDSN has continued to grow in the last year, with a focus on events examining developments in research and policy that relate to WPS and women's participation in the defence and national security sector, as well career-focused speed mentoring events, which were expanded to Sydney and Perth this past year as well .

The network has largely relied on the partnership and collaboration of external stakeholders to deliver events. Mentors and mentees included participants from the ADF, Defence APS, DFAT, defence industry, academia, as well as university students. The level of ADF engagement in these events has been considerable in terms of mentors and mentees, as well as support.

Since the creation of WDSN, the network has built a subscribers list of over 3500. The network has held 26 events since its launch in October 2014, with all but one selling out. The largest event held by WDSN was a Speed Mentoring night, which received over 300 registrations.

In the last year WDSN has established a presence on social media, using both Twitter and Facebook. The WDSN Twitter account has 702 followers and the Facebook page 952 followers. During this time, the WDSN profiled 9 emerging, mid-level and senior career women.

Engagement in WDSN is complemented by the activities of ASPI's Women Peace and Security (WPS) projects and research. ASPI continues to inform and contribute to the national debate on WPS and the next reiteration of Australia's National Action Plan.

### Research program areas

To achieve our objectives, ASPI research staff operate in program areas that belong to either the Defence, Strategy and Capability theme or the National Security theme.

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

## Defence, Strategy and National Security Programs

### Defence and Strategy Program

The Defence and Strategy Program analyses 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, including:

- 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 the management of the Department of Defence 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 terms
- policies and capabilities of the defence industry
- project management strategies
- defence economic trends, especially as they apply to materiel.

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 Program

ASPI's International Program explores some of the challenges and opportunities for Australia as they relate to maintaining international peace and security. The program also contributes to broader research efforts 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.

### Counter-Terrorism Program

The Counter-Terrorism Program has two main purposes:

- to elucidate the threats posed by terrorists to Australia and to the maintenance of international peace and security
- to advise, comment and engage with policymakers on how to best prepare Australia for the threat that terrorists pose to our national security interests.

To achieve those goals, the centre has continued to establish itself as the leading think tank authority in Australia on national security, terrorism and counterterrorism.

### Risk and Resilience Program

The Risk and Resilience Program examines new ideas and approaches to thinking about and managing the impacts of natural and socio-technical hazards in Australia. Its focus includes developing relevant advice and commentary, informing policy choices within national, state and local governments and the private sector, and enhancing assessments of vulnerability and mitigation options to promote resilience in human systems. The program has four key goals:

- Deepen national understanding of the benefits and challenges of using resilience as a central theme in effective disaster risk reduction practice by public and private-sector agencies.
- Expand appreciation of the need to include resilience as a base-level design factor for critical infrastructure systems to maintain continuity of essential services and reduce vulnerability.
- Promote inclusive debate in government and communities on how to generate and sustain community resilience in modern Australia.
- Enhance capacity building in disaster management in the ASEAN region and Oceania.

### The North and Australia's Security & Strategic Policing and Law Enforcement Program

Established in 2019, the North and Australia's Security Program has developed a sustained research focus on the security of Australia's north and the north's critical role in contributing to the broader security of Australia. In doing so it has actively promoted public policy discourse on the role of the North in National Security.

The aim of the program is to:

- Maintain a strong public policy focus on the role of the north in the broader security of Australia at a time when strategic circumstances are driving new policy thinking in Canberra.
- Develop further public policy discourse on developing a modernised way of thinking about the north and security by updating strategic frameworks that remain anchored in the 1980's 'defence of Australia' context.
- Promote a northern lens in broader discussions of national security interests beyond Defence – encompassing Home Affairs, border and customs, space, cyber and bio-security and energy security.
- Explore the north's interest in the wider context of wider Asia-Pacific security and look for positive regional and alliance engagement opportunities.
- Make a strong contribution to NT's role in the Ministerial Forum on Northern Development.

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 Australia's international strategic objectives.
- Help law enforcement agencies position themselves for the future.

### *The Strategist*

*The Strategist* is ASPI's online commentary and analysis site and aims to provide fresh ideas on Australia's critical defence and strategic policy choices. It also aims to encourage and facilitate discussion and debate among the strategy community and Australian public. The views expressed on *The Strategist* are those of the individual authors and do not represent the views of ASPI or the institutions to which the authors are attached.

## **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 departments with responsibilities for cyber issues and a range of private-sector partners and creative thinkers to help Australia create constructive cyber policies for application at home and abroad.

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

ICPC has four key aims:

- Lift the level of Australian and Asia–Pacific public understanding and debate on cybersecurity.
- Provide a focus for developing innovative and high-quality public policy on cyber issues.
- Facilitate Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues on cyber issues in the Asia–Pacific region.
- Link different levels of government, business and the public in a sustained dialogue on cybersecurity.

## **ASPI Professional Development**

ASPI Professional Development (formerly ASPI Education) has now been operational for 3 years. It aims to help improve judgement through short, intensive professional development courses and workshops that focus on policymaking, thinking skills and strategic analysis. ASPI is committed to fostering the next generation of strategic policy thinkers and plays an active role in professional development for government clients, particularly the Department of Defence.

The courses that ASPI Professional Development provides are highly interactive, delivered to small groups and tailored to participants' needs. ASPI Professional Development conducts specially developed authentic learning experiences using our significant research base covering defence and

national security, risk and resilience, counterterrorism, cyber matters, strategic policing and border security.

These educational experiences use reality-based contexts in which participants grapple with exciting and relevant policy challenges, guided by some of Australia's most experienced policy practitioners and thinkers on these subjects.

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*“...I greatly value my relationship and long-standing engagement with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute... since its establishment in 2001, ASPI has earned a first-class global reputation in cutting edge strategic analysis and reporting. And I am greatly honoured to return here today to an ASPI forum now as the Minister for Defence to address the institute's flagship annual event.”* **Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds, Minister for Defence, 14 June 2019**

