

Australian Government

Australian Signals Directorate



CORPORATE PLAN 2023-24





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# Foreword

# **Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence**

For over 75 years, the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) has defended Australia from global threats and advanced our national interests by providing foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations. It remains at the frontline of defending our nation and keeping Australia safe and secure.

Australia is facing the most difficult strategic circumstances since the end of the Second World War. The Defence Strategic Review and the Government's response to it sets an ambitious, but necessary, agenda for reform to position Australia to meet these challenges. This includes enhancing our cyber capabilities to deter any potential adversary and hold them at bay at greater distance. As our strategic environment becomes less predictable, the work performed by ASD is more important than ever.

This Corporate Plan outlines how ASD will respond to these challenges over the next four years. This includes delivering on the Government's investment in ASD's cyber and intelligence capabilities known as Project REDSPICE (Resilience, Effects, Defence, Space, Intelligence, Cyber, Enablers). The Government's commitment to REDSPICE recognises the critical role ASD plays in our national security.



**The Hon Richard Marles MP** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence



# **Director-General's introduction**

I, as the accountable authority of the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD), present the 2023–24 ASD Corporate Plan, which covers the period 2023–24 to 2026–27, as required under section 35(1)(b) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

ASD's purpose is to defend Australia from global threats and advance our national interest. For over 75 years, ASD's core functions to achieve this purpose have been added to, but the fundamentals have not changed. ASD's highest priority will always be the protection of Australian lives, whether that is through supporting Australia's warfighters or detecting and, in some cases, disrupting malicious threats against Australian interests.

The environment in which ASD operates is becoming increasingly challenging. Today, our region is far more complex and far less predictable than at any time since the Second World War. To meet these changes in the strategic environment, ASD must continue to evolve its capabilities. We must be able to handle the increasing complexity and volume of data, respond to new developments in technology, provide our people with the best possible tools to achieve our purpose, and be resilient to changes in the environment. The REDSPICE package is designed to respond to these challenges. My vision for ASD is that we are a world-class intelligence, covert effects and cyber security agency, enabled by talented, dedicated people, leading-edge capabilities, strong partnerships, and the trust of the Australian public – and we will continue strengthening accountability, transparency and governance of our activities to further build this trust.

This Corporate Plan outlines the steps we will take to achieve this vision in 2023–24 and beyond. ASD will evaluate and report on its performance against its purpose and key activities in the 2023–24 Annual Report.



Rachel Noble PSM Director-General Australian Signals Directorate



# ASD's purpose

The Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) defends Australia from global threats and advances the national interest by providing foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations, as directed by the Government.

ASD's purpose is achieved through the delivery of three key activities, as described in the *Defence Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*:

- providing foreign signals intelligence
- providing cyber security services
- conducting offensive cyber operations.

ASD is a statutory agency within the Defence portfolio, reporting directly to the Minister for Defence. It operates under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). All of ASD's activities are subject to oversight from the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS). The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) provides further oversight of ASD's administration, expenditure and enabling legislation. It also considers other matters within its scope that are referred by the Australian Senate, House of Representatives, or a minister of the Australian Government.

ASD operates under the *Intelligence Services Act 2001* (the ISA), which specifies that the organisation's functions are to:

- collect foreign signals intelligence
- communicate foreign signals intelligence
- prevent and disrupt offshore cyber-enabled crime
- provide cyber security advice and assistance to Australian governments, businesses and individuals
- support military operations
- protect the specialised tools ASD uses to fulfil its functions
- cooperate with, and assist, the national security community's performance of its functions.

To achieve its purpose, ASD needs to keep pace with the latest technology trends and invest in cutting-edge capabilities to gain asymmetric advantage. ASD's activities are enabled by innovative techniques, including specialist tools to probe large volumes of data to detect threats. ASD's mastery of technology also underpins the formulation of sound advice to protect Australia from sophisticated threats.

Partnerships are critical to the organisation's success. ASD works closely with the Australian national security community, overseas intelligence and cyber security partners, academia and industry. This level of collaboration is essential to comprehensively understand the threat environment and to stay at the cutting edge of technology.

ASD's success is founded on the ingenuity of its workforce. It seeks to recruit and develop a curious and imaginative workforce which is not deterred by difficult challenges. Recruiting the requisite specialist technological expertise has become increasingly challenging, given the high demand for staff with these skillsets.

This combination of a uniquely skilled workforce, empowered by innovative technology, enabled by responsible financial management, and leveraging partner capabilities, positions the organisation to deliver trusted intelligence, cyber security expertise and offensive cyber operations for Australia's national interest.

# ASD's five strategic objectives

#### Deliver Strategic Advantage

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ASD *delivers strategic advantage* for Australia by providing foreign signals intelligence that protects and advances Australia's national interest. Foreign intelligence collection activities are guided by strategic priorities set by Government.

Lead Cyber Security



# ASD is the Australian Government's *leading cyber security agency*, and aims to make Australia the most secure place to connect online and to foster national cyber security resilience. ASD's Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) monitors cyber threats targeting Australian interests, and provides advice and information, including through an international network of Computer Emergency Response Teams to help protect Australians. When serious cyber incidents occur, ASD leads the Australian Government response to help mitigate the threat and strengthen defences.

#### Support Military Operations



ASD has a long history of *supporting Australian military operations*, with a heritage dating back to the Second World War. Today, ASD supports Australian Defence Force (ADF) operations around the globe, including by providing intelligence and offensive cyber capabilities to enable the warfighter and protect ADF personnel and assets. ASD also draws on its deep technical expertise to help the ADF stay ahead of technology advancements in the region, including the introduction of 5th generation weapons and cyber-warfare capabilities.

Counter Cyber-Enabled Threats



ASD capabilities play an important role in *countering cyber-enabled threats*. The organisation protects Australia and Australians by preventing and disrupting offshore cyber-enabled crime, including the activities of organised criminal groups using malware to target Australians, and terrorists who use the internet to plan and incite attacks against Australian interests.

Provide Trusted Advice and Expertise

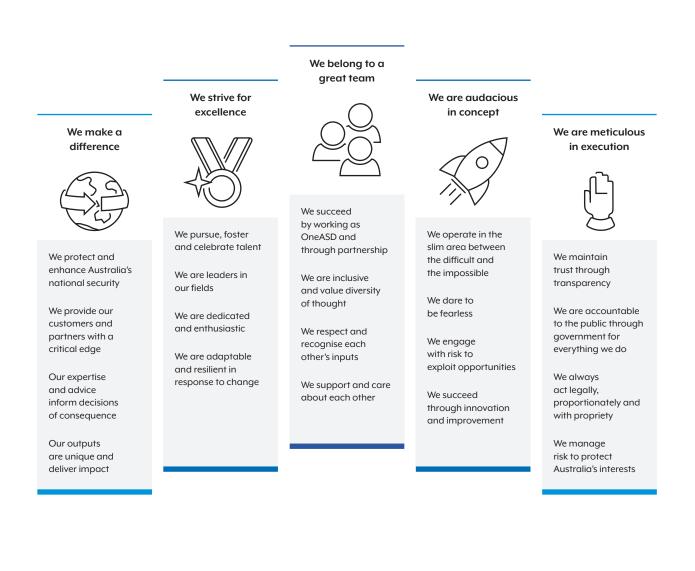


ASD provides *trusted advice and expertise* to government, business and the community. ASD draws on its deep technical understanding of communications technology to help the Australian Government and the public understand the nature of the cyber threat environment, how they might be vulnerable and what they can do to protect themselves.

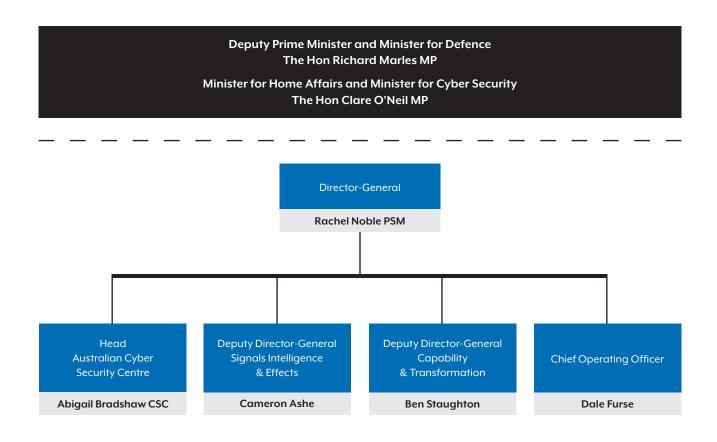


# OUR VALUES

# Reveal their secrets. Protect our own.



# Our organisation



# Australian Signals Directorate Strategic Plan 2023–24 to 2026–27

### **Our Purpose**

Defend Australia from global threats and advance our national interests through the provision of foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations, as directed by Government.



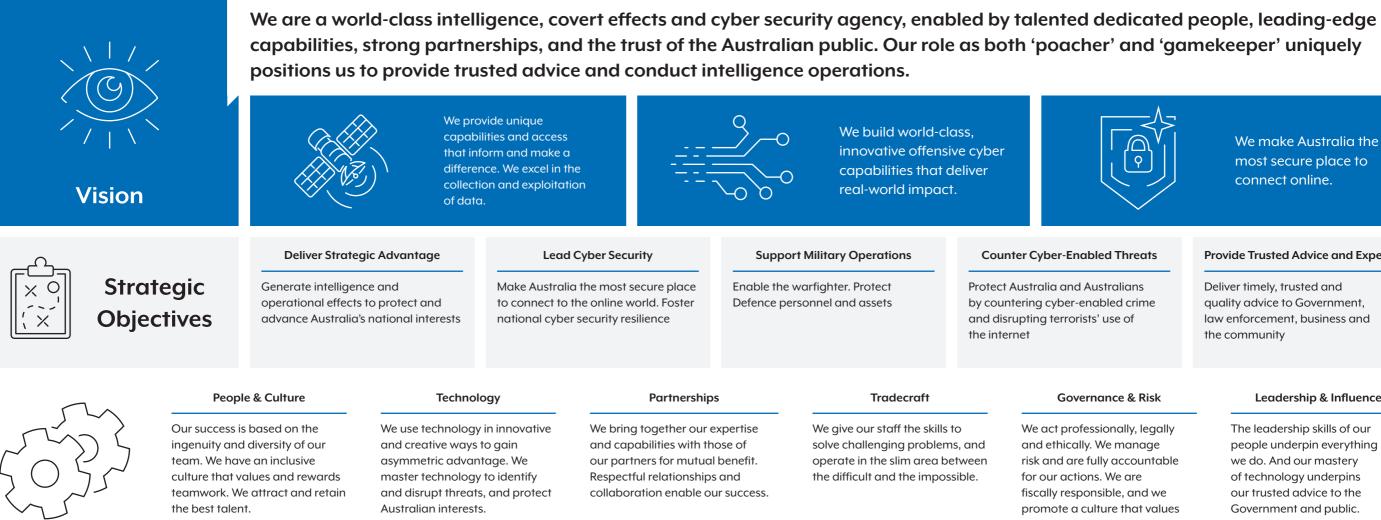
**Global Shifts** 





Technological Change





# Enabli Capabil

	People & Culture		Technology	Pa	ırtnerships	Tradecro	ıft	
Enabling Capabilities	Our success is based on the ingenuity and diversity of our team. We have an inclusive culture that values and rewards teamwork. We attract and retain the best talent.	and asyn mas and	ise technology in innovative creative ways to gain nmetric advantage. We ter technology to identify disrupt threats, and protect ralian interests.	and capabiliti our partners f Respectful rele	ether our expertise ies with those of for mutual benefit. ationships and enable our success.	We give our staff the solve challenging pr operate in the slim c the difficult and the	oblems, and area between	We and risk for fisc pro stro sec
Our Values	We make a difference		We strive for exce	llence	We belong to	a great team	We are c	audac

#### **Context & External Drivers**







**Partnerships** 



We make Australia the most secure place to connect online.

strong compliance and security practices.

#### **Provide Trusted Advice and Expertise**

Deliver timely, trusted and guality advice to Government, law enforcement, business and the community

#### Leadership & Influence

The leadership skills of our people underpin everything we do. And our mastery of technology underpins our trusted advice to the Government and public.

We are meticulous in execution



# ASD's operating context

ASD's ability to deliver the outcomes described in its corporate plan is influenced by changes in its operating environment. These changes are key to ASD's efforts to evolve its business, ensuring it is well-positioned to continue to help keep Australia safe.

# Environment



GLOBAL SHIFTS

Australia's security and prosperity rely on a secure, stable, prosperous, rules-based region. As communicated in the Defence Strategic Review 2023, Australia's region, the Indo-Pacific, faces increasing competition that operates on multiple levels – economic, military, strategic and diplomatic – all interwoven and all framed by an intense contest of values and narratives. The risks of military escalation or miscalculation are rising.

ASD's capabilities provide the Australian Government with intelligence, covert effects and cyber security expertise that deliver strategic advantage, policy and advice that protects national security and sovereignty, and practical support that informs law enforcement and military operations. Across the life of this corporate plan, ASD will continue to invest in developing its workforce and technology to ensure it responds flexibly to the changing priorities of the Australian Government.



## TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Technological advances provide great benefit to society, but these advances also introduce risks.

ASD's mastery of technology enables it to protect Australia from global threats. But technology is evolving rapidly. State and non-state actors can access increasingly sophisticated communication technologies and the tools used to exploit them.

ASD has a dual role: as a trusted advisor to the Australian Government to help it navigate major technological change, and as an exploiter of technology to deliver foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations in support of Australian Government priorities.

ASD has always evolved its capabilities in response to technological change. In the years covered by this corporate plan, the challenge of maintaining mastery of technology will become more complex and demanding. To meet this challenge, ASD will enhance science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills in its workforce and invest in new and emerging technologies, including the delivery of the next-generation data science and artificial intelligence.



# PUBLIC TRUST

As an intelligence agency, ASD has been entrusted with sensitive powers. ASD takes this responsibility very seriously.

ASD's functions are set out in the ISA, along with the limitations on these functions. Under this legislation, ASD is accountable for its actions to the Australian Government, the Minister for Defence, and the IGIS – who has the powers of a standing Royal Commission – to provide independent assurance that ASD acts legally and ethically.

ASD recognises the importance of maintaining the trust of the Australian Government and the Australian public.

While, for security reasons, ASD may not be able to share the details of its operations, ASD seeks to increase the information it shares with Australians about its functions. ASD is committed to assisting Australians in understanding the principles on which ASD makes decisions, the way it protects the privacy of Australians, and its strong culture of operating within the spirit and letter of the law.



#### FISCAL ENVIRONMENT

The Australian Government has made a significant investment in building ASD's foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber capabilities. This includes a \$9.9 billion investment in cyber and intelligence capabilities over the next decade through the REDSPICE package.

ASD continues to refine and enhance its governance and accountability frameworks, including enterprise performance management and fit-for-purpose financial management systems, to ensure it is operating efficiently, sustainably and responsibly within its forward budget. ASD will continue to build on its strong foundation and culture of governance.



# Capability

ASD's capabilities enable it to deliver on its purpose and strategic objectives. For the duration of this corporate plan, ASD will place special emphasis on building and enhancing the capabilities needed to meet the challenges of the evolving strategic environment, including changes in technology and data analysis. It will invest in improving leadership skills and building a culture that leverages the strength of a diverse and capable workforce. It will build and foster partnerships to deliver value in this complex operating environment.



### **People and culture**

ASD's people are its greatest resource. The skills and experience of its people are in high demand across private industry and government. To ensure its success, ASD must accelerate its efforts to attract, develop and retain a diverse and highly skilled workforce. Over the life of this corporate plan, ASD will significantly expand its workforce, creating new jobs at locations across Australia.



### Tradecraft

ASD's foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations missions require a highly skilled workforce, equipped with the right skills to be effective and successful at delivering its missions. The pace of technological change and the evolving threat landscape increases ASD's opportunities to develop new tradecraft, but also increase the challenge of keeping ahead. ASD needs to ensure that its analysts are equipped with the right skills and can deploy modern tradecraft against ASD's toughest analytical problems.



### Technology

Technology is at the heart of ASD's capability. Mastering and adapting to technological change is crucial to enabling ASD's ongoing success in delivering foreign signals intelligence, cyber security, and offensive cyber operations. ASD's ICT infrastructure and services will continue to evolve in support of mission operations and the delivery of corporate services.



#### Governance

ASD's status as a statutory agency has given it the autonomy to build enterprise governance and risk frameworks that are tailored to the unique nature of ASD's work. As part of this work, ASD has established robust compliance and oversight processes, which provide assurance that ASD acts within the spirit and letter of the laws that enable us.



### Leadership and influence

The leadership skills of ASD's people – at all levels of the organisation – are vital to its success. ASD's leaders are at the forefront of delivering strategic initiatives, and supporting and developing the workforce.



### **Diversity and inclusion**

ASD's workforce operates in the slim area between the difficult and the impossible. Solving the toughest problems in foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations requires teams of clever, curious people with diverse and complementary skills. ASD's strength, resilience and creativity are derived from the different ages, backgrounds, genders, cultures, neurodiversity, physical abilities, religions and sexualities of its staff. ASD is committed to providing a respectful and inclusive workplace.



# Cooperation and partnerships

In a complex and evolving world, ASD cannot operate effectively alone. Strong partnerships underpin ASD's ability to understand global threats, collect foreign signals intelligence, formulate and implement cyber security advice, and conduct offensive cyber operations in support of the Australian Government.

ASD has a long history of working effectively with its partners in the National Intelligence Community (NIC), Australian federal, state, and local government entities, the ADF, academia, and industry. ASD collaborates across the private and public sector, providing advice and assistance to prevent and combat threats and minimise harm to Australians.

ASD has long-standing, robust and meaningful ties with its Five-Eyes counterparts in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, and New Zealand, as well as other international partnerships including through the international network of Computer Emergency Response Teams.

In the period covered by this corporate plan, ASD will strengthen partnerships with its international counterpart agencies, state, territory and federal government agencies, industry, academia, and think-tanks to meet the Australian Government's strategic objectives and operational needs. ASD will also continue to strengthen partnerships with all levels of government, critical infrastructure operators and Australian businesses to boost Australia's whole-of-economy cyber defence capabilities. An expanded national and international footprint will enable ASD to integrate more closely with its partners and improve the resilience of its key activities.





# Risk oversight and management

## Risk and risk management at ASD

Risk is inherent in every aspect of ASD's mission. Our key sources of enterprise risk are:

- Loss of Licence to Operate
- Operational Exposure
- Intelligence Failure
- Disruptive Technologies and Data Science
- Compliance with the Law
- Delivering on Cyber Security
- Workforce
- Morale and Wellbeing
- Protective Security

Risk management is incorporated in all facets of ASD, from embedding a positive risk culture in the agency, to effective risk management practices and decision-making processes.

ASD's *Risk Management Policy and Framework* defines key responsibilities, risk appetites and risk tolerances. This allows project, program, operational and specialist risks to be identified, assessed and consistently managed by individual business areas. This model is supported by a central risk function that coordinates reporting and analysis for senior decision-makers.

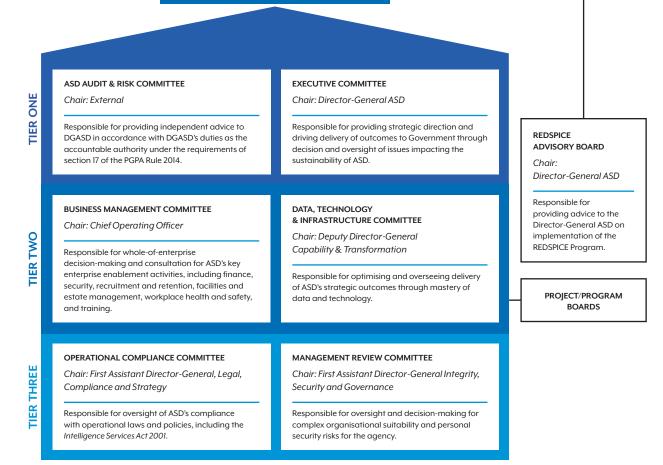
ASD continues to embed risk management principles to support timely decision-making and reporting, prioritisation of resources, increased compliance and efficiency, and continual improvement in operations.

#### **Executive committee structure**

ASD's Executive Committee is the primary advisory committee to support the Director-General in the oversight of all ASD functions. The committee defines operational and corporate risk tolerances, and oversees effective risk management across the agency. The Director-General is supported in these functions by ASD's governance framework and committees.

An external REDSPICE Advisory Board has been established to provide the Director-General ASD with independent advice and oversight on delivery of the REDSPICE Program.





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# Performance

ASD's purpose is to defend Australia from global threats and advance the national interest through providing foreign signals intelligence, cyber security support and conducting offensive cyber operations, as directed by the Australian Government. While ASD's purpose will not change significantly over the duration of this corporate plan, the way in which ASD meets the needs of Australians and the Australian Government will evolve in response to shifts in its operating context and changes in the global threat environment.

ASD reviewed its performance measures and identified opportunities to mature and improve its performance information in line with Department of Finance guidance and the Australian National Audit Office's recent audit reports. As a result of this review, ASD has streamlined the number of performance measures in this corporate plan by combining the previous Performance Measures 5 and 6 and removing Performance Measure 7. This set of streamlined performance measures are included in the *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24* (PBS).

For the duration of this corporate plan, ASD will assess and measure its performance through a mix of qualitative and quantitative assessments. The performance measures, targets and evaluation methodology are detailed in the following tables. Performance targets carry equal weight and where a performance criterion has one or more targets, success will be measured by the proportion of targets achieved.

Qualitative performance measures will be assessed based on the impact of the product or service provided by ASD to its customers. Where ASD has indicated that its target is high impact, this means that the output will be delivered in a timely and relevant manner, will provide or enable exercisable options, and will directly inform and shape decision-making. ASD will use case studies to demonstrate high impact and will select activities reflecting ASD's highest priority missions and/or a shift in operational resourcing.

Due to the nature of ASD's work, some aspects of ASD's performance will continue to be reported through classified channels.

The ASD Audit and Risk Committee (ASDARC) was established in 2018 to comply with section 45 of the PGPA Act. The ASDARC provides independent assurance of ASD's risk management framework, internal governance, and performance. It provides independent advice to the Director-General with respect to financial reporting, ASD's system of oversight and management, ASD's system of internal control, and internal and external audit reports.

# ASD's performance framework

#### PURPOSE

The Australian Signals Directorate defends Australia from global threats and advances the national interest through the provision of foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations, as directed by Government.

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Deliver Strategic Advantage, Lead Cyber Security, Support Military Operations, Counter Cyber-enabled Threats, Provide Trusted and Expert Advice.

		KEY AC	CTIVITIES	
Provide Foreign Si	gnals Intelligence	Provide Cyber S	Security Services	Condu
		Performan	ce Measures	
1. ASD's foreign signals intelligence meets Government's expectations to deliver strategic advantage and enables National Intelligence Community operations.	2. ASD's foreign signals intelligence products and technical expertise provide effective support for military operations and activities.	3. ASD provides high-quality, impactful cyber security services to government, critical infrastructure and services, business, families and individuals.	4. ASD delivers partnerships, programs and technical capability that strengthen national cyber security or resilience.	5. ASD's offensive cyber operat operations and activities, and countering offshore cyber thre
		Performa	nce Metrics	
1.1. Government expectations to deliver strategic advantage are met.	2.1. ASD's foreign signals intelligence support the ADF's military operations and activities, technological advantage and capability development.	3.1. ASD's cyber security advice and assistance supports stakeholders to improve or maintain their cyber security posture.	4.1. Cyber security information and expertise exchanges with partners help prevent, detect or remediate cyber threats to Australia.	5.1. Offensive cyber capabilities operations and activities.
1.2. National Intelligence Community operational requirements are met.		3.2. Systems to support assistance and technical advice are available for use by ASD and relevant stakeholders.	4.2. ASD supports emerging cyber security research that may help prevent, detect or remediate cyber threats to Australia.	5.2 Offensive cyber operations whole-of-government requirer
		3.3. ASD's Top Secret network assessment and authorisation activities and key management services support stakeholders' requirements.		

duct Offensive Cyber Operations

erations provide effective and timely support for military nd meet whole-of-government requirements for hreats.

ties provide effective and timely support for ADF military

ons that counter offshore cyber threats meet irements.



# ASD's performance measures

The performance information outlined in this corporate plan and the *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24* will be used as the basis for ASD's 2023–24 annual performance statements. The performance measures have been developed to meet the guidance in rule 16EA of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* and have been streamlined in this reporting period.

#### KEY ACTIVITY: PROVIDE FOREIGN SIGNALS INTELLIGENCE

#### **Performance Measure 1**

ASD's foreign signals intelligence meets Government's expectations to deliver strategic advantage and enables National Intelligence Community operations.

Metrics	How success will be measured (targets)
1.1 Government expectations to deliver strategic advantage are met.	Government and NIC stakeholders confirm that ASD products have high impact.
1.2 NIC operational requirements are met.	NIC and Defence stakeholders confirm that ASD products have high impact.

#### Data sources and methodology

- NIC evaluations of ASD's intelligence products, technical expertise and advice.
- Analysis of feedback from Government, Defence and NIC agencies.
- Analysis of feedback on request for information answered by ASD to support or inform NIC operations.

Timeline

#### Performance Measure 2

ASD's foreign signals intelligence products and technical expertise provide effective support for military operations and activities.

#### Metrics

2.1 ASD's foreign signals intelligence supports the ADF's military operations and activities, technological advantage and capability development.

How success will be measured (targets)

ADF/Defence stakeholders confirm ASD support had a high impact.

#### Data sources and methodology

- Analysis of feedback on the efficacy, timeliness and value of ASD's intelligence products and expertise.
- Analysis of feedback on ASD's support for ADF capability advantage.

Timeline



#### KEY ACTIVITY: PROVIDE CYBER SECURITY SERVICES

#### Performance Measure 3

ASD provides high quality, impactful cyber security services to government, critical infrastructure and services, business, families and individuals.

Metrics	How success will be measured (targets)
3.1 ASD's cyber security advice and assistance supports stakeholders to improve or maintain their cyber security posture.	Information Security Manual (ISM) and Essential Eight (E8) are updated at least annually. Number of Infosec Registered Assessors Program (IRAP) assessors remains constant or increases. Demonstrated impact.
3.2 Systems to support assistance and technical advice are available for use by ASD and relevant stakeholders.	Availability of support assistance and technical advice remains at or above 99%.
3.3 ASD's Top Secret network assessment and authorisation activities, and key management services support stakeholders' requirements.	All requests are resolved within timeframes agreed with the stakeholder. Availability remains at or above 99%.

#### Data sources and methodology

- Number of times the ISM and E8 are updated.
- Qualitative analysis of impact of advice and technical support provided to partners, industry and Government.
- Number of endorsed IRAP assessors listed on *cyber.gov.au*.
- Percentage of requests for Top Secret assessment and authorisation resolved in a timely manner.
- Percentage of time customers have access to cryptographic keying material.
- Number of times *cyber.gov.au* is accessed and products on *cyber.gov.au* are downloaded.

Timeline

#### Performance Measure 4

ASD delivers partnerships, programs and technical capability that strengthen national cyber security or resilience.

Metrics	How success will be measured (targets)
4.1 Cyber security information and expertise exchanges with partners help prevent, detect or remediate cyber threats to Australia.	Number of ACSC Partners increases.
	Demonstrated impact.
4.2 ASD supports emerging cyber security research that may help prevent, detect or remediate cyber threats to Australia.	Demonstrated impact.
Data sources and methodology	

- Membership numbers of the ACSC Partnership Program.
- Qualitative analysis of impact of support to domestic partners, including Government and industry.
- Qualitative analysis of impact of support to international partners.
- Qualitative assessment of impact of engagement to support cyber security research.

Timeline



#### KEY ACTIVITY: CONDUCT OFFENSIVE CYBER OPERATIONS

#### Performance Measure 5

ASD's offensive cyber operations provide effective and timely support for military operations and activities, and meet whole-of-government requirements for countering offshore cyber threats.

Metrics	How success will be measured (targets)
5.1 Offensive cyber capabilities provide effective and timely support for ADF military operations and activities.	ADF/Defence stakeholders confirm ASD support had a high impact.
5.2 Offensive cyber operations that counter offshore cyber threats meet whole-of-government security requirements.	Government stakeholders confirm ASD operations had a high impact.
Data sources and methodology	
Analysis of ADE/Defense feedback on officerous tim	adiance and value of ASD's offensive suber support to

- Analysis of ADF/Defence feedback on efficacy, timeliness and value of ASD's offensive cyber support to military operations and activities.
- Analysis of Government feedback on the efficacy, timeliness and value of ASD's offensive cyber operations to counter offshore cyber threats.
- Analysis of after-action reports and other post-activity reporting from operations and other cyber support activities.

Timeline

ASD.GOV.AU