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Dr Steven Kennedy PSM  
Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Friday 2 January 2026

*Steven*

Dear Dr ~~Kennedy~~,

On Monday 29 December 2025, the Prime Minister publicly released the Terms of Reference for the Independent Review I will be conducting into the effectiveness of Intelligence and Law Enforcement agencies, especially ASIO and the AFP, in the context of the terrorist attack in Sydney on Sunday 14 December 2025. Although you will already have them, attached is a copy of the Terms of Reference.

I will seek a meeting with you at the earliest opportunity to work through some practical arrangements relating to the Review and for an initial discussion about the information I will be seeking and any initial advice or suggestions you might have.

The Review is to be completed by 30 April 2026, so it will require a major effort. For logistical and support purposes I will be based in The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, but will be reporting to the Government, not the Department.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

In addition to personnel arranged by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, I will be assisted in the Review by Peter Baxter, former Deputy Secretary in the Department of Defence; Tony Sheehan, former Deputy Secretary in the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Attorney Generals, Foreign Affairs and Trade and a former ASIO Deputy Director General; and Tara Inverarity, who is a First Assistant Secretary on secondment from the Attorney-General's Department.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

We will provide you and other relevant Departments and Agencies with a draft copy of relevant sections of both the classified and unclassified versions of the Review for comment and cross checking of factual information contained in the Review.

To assist our discussion, attached is a preliminary list of the information we are seeking from PM&C. I appreciate that the request will involve a lot of work at a very busy time during the holiday season, but it is imperative that we obtain it, including in batches if necessary, at the earliest opportunity before 26 January 2026. Your responses should be classified at whatever level is necessary.

As the Review concerns the deadliest terrorist attack in Australia's history I look forward to your Department's full and unqualified cooperation in ensuring that the Review is frank, open and complete.

*With best wishes*

s 22(1)(a)(ii)


Dennis Richardson

Independent Review regarding Bondi Terrorist Attack, 14 December 2025

s 47E(d)



s 22(1)(a)(ii)



## **Independent Commonwealth Review into Australia's federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies terms of reference**

In the context of the Bondi terrorist attack Mr Dennis Richardson AC has been asked to undertake an Independent Review into Australia's federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies, to be completed by the end of April 2026.

Mr Richardson will assess whether relevant Commonwealth intelligence and law enforcement agencies - predominantly the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Australian Federal Police - in the context of the Bondi terrorist attack performed to maximum effectiveness; have adequate powers; the right systems, processes and procedures; and an appropriate authorising environment for information sharing with other federal, state and territory agencies.

In doing so, Mr Richardson will consider the circumstances in which the alleged offenders were assessed by agencies over time, to inform any adjustments that are necessary to the way that Commonwealth and state and territory law enforcement and intelligence agencies all interact with each other.

In particular, Mr Richardson will examine the following matters in relation to the Bondi terrorist attack:

- what relevant Commonwealth agencies knew about the alleged offenders before the attack, and when
- the interaction and information sharing between Commonwealth agencies, and between Commonwealth and state and territory agencies
- what judgements were made and actions taken by relevant agencies

- whether there were any additional measures that relevant Commonwealth agencies could have taken to prevent the terrorist attack
- whether relevant Commonwealth agencies were prevented from taking prohibitive actions by the current legislative framework and authorising environment
- what additional measures, if any, should be taken by relevant Commonwealth agencies to prevent similar attacks occurring in the future:
  - whether they have adequate legislative powers, the right systems, processes and procedures, and an appropriate authorising environment for information sharing with other federal and state and territory agencies
  - whether warrant and data access regimes and powers are adequate
  - whether any legislative amendments are required.

Mr Richardson will engage with NSW agencies and, to the extent necessary, agencies in other states and territories.

The review will build on the findings of the 2024 Independent Intelligence Review and also the 2019 Comprehensive Review of the Legal Framework of the National Intelligence Community.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will establish a secretariat for the review and provide logistics support to the review as required.

Mr Richardson will have full access to all material he considers may be relevant to his inquiry. Relevant departments and agencies are to cooperate fully with

the review and provide assistance in the form of documents, data, materials and meetings as requested.