

First National Security Statement to the Australian Parliament

The Prime Minister of Australia The Hon. Kevin Rudd MP, 4 December 2008



Prime Minister Kevin Rudd presented Australia's inaugural National Security Statement (NSS) to Federal Parliament on 4 December, 2008, outlining initiatives to improve national security policy advice, coordination and governance.

The NSS is a key part of the Government's reform agenda to build a more secure Australia, and addresses some of the emerging challenges Australia may face in the 21st Century.

The NSS will become a regular statement to the parliament on the state of Australia's national security and the new and emerging challenges we face. It announces that the Government will appoint a National Security Adviser, Mr Duncan Lewis AO*, to provide a new level of leadership, direction and coordination to our national security agencies.

The Government believes it is essential to engage with the Australian people on the threats we face and the role the wider community can play in responding to those threats.

Australia's national security community is highly effective and has proven highly adaptable. But in an increasingly complex and interconnected security environment, we need a more integrated national security structure that enhances national security policy coordination.

The NSS sets out the Australian Government's strategic direction on national security. It articulates Australia's national security interests and organising principles and describes the Government's comprehensive view of security challenges facing Australia.

The government's comprehensive concept of national security recognises that Australia has particular circumstances and interests that differ from other nations.

The strategic environment is increasingly complex and inter-connected, and the boundaries between international and domestic security issues are increasingly blurred.

The NSS also addresses the recommendations of Mr Ric Smith, AO, PSM, in his Homeland and Border Security Review.

Mr Rudd commissioned Mr Smith, the former Secretary of the Department of Defence, to report on the best and most efficient way to coordinate overall national security arrangements.

Mr Smith has now finished his work. The Government has considered his report and strongly agrees with its recommendations. Mr Smith's advice is that big departments risk becoming less accountable, less agile, less adaptable and more inward-looking.

The Government has therefore decided that the best solution for Australia is not another agency, but a new level of leadership, direction and coordination among the agencies we already have.

The Government has also decided that an enhanced Customs and Border Protection Command is the preferable structure for Australia to meet the complex border security challenges of the future.

In addition to the appointment of a National Security Adviser, our national security structure will be improved by the creation of a strategic policy framework, a National Intelligence and Coordination Committee and enhancing our national crisis management arrangements.

The National Intelligence Coordination Committee will have responsibility for foreign, defence, security and law enforcement intelligence.

Our national crisis management arrangements will be improved through the establishment of a Crisis Coordination Centre, following consideration in the Budget context.

To access the full National Security Statement visit
http://www.pm.gov.au/docs/20081204_national_security_statement.rtf

* A profile of Mr Duncan Lewis AO is scheduled for the May 2009 edition of this journal.