

Malcolm Turnbull has announced an expert panel to undertake a broad review of Australia's intelligence agencies over the next few months.

The inquiry will be done by Professor Michael L'Estrange, a former secretary of the foreign affairs department, who served on the staff of the second Hope royal commission into security and intelligence agencies, and Stephen Merchant, a former director of the Defence Signals Directorate, who has extensive experience in defence strategy and working with the intelligence communities of our major allies. In 2015 Merchant received the United States Intelligence Community Seal Medallion.

They will be assisted by Sir Iain Lobban, who served as director of the United Kingdom's Government Communications Headquarters, the UK counterpart of ASD. He also was a member of the expert panel for Australia's 2016 cyber security strategy, released in April.

The latest of now-regular reviews of the intelligence area, with the last in 2011, the examination will cover the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), the Office of National Assessments (ONA), the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD), the Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO) and the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation (AGO) .

The suite of organisations covers the gathering intelligence at home and abroad and its assessment and analysis, dealing with the threats of terrorism and espionage, areas that have seen major changes in recent years.

Part of the review, to report in the first half of next year, will be to examine whether the legislative framework is appropriate and the oversight adequate.

Turnbull said this was "an opportunity to assess whether our current intelligence arrangements, structures and mechanisms are best placed to meet the security challenges we are likely to face in the years ahead".

Intelligence agencies to be scrutinised

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

There will be both public and secret versions of the report. Public submissions will be taken, with a closing date of January 4.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Read more <http://theconversation.com/intelligence-agencies-to-be-scrutinised-68363>