

Royal Commission on Intelligence and Security

Establishment, conduct and outcomes

The Royal Commission on Intelligence and Security (RCIS) was established by the Whitlam government on 21 August 1974. Robert Marsden Hope, a Justice of the New South Wales Supreme Court, was named as Royal Commissioner. In summary, Hope's terms of reference required him to:

- report on the history of the Australian security and intelligence agencies
- make recommendations about the future of the agencies to enable them to serve Australia in the most efficient and effective way
- recommend procedures for the review of adverse security decisions against individuals
- make recommendations about the machinery for ministerial control, direction and coordination of the security and intelligence services.

The Royal Commission received submissions from many sources including former ministers and public servants, current and former staff of the security agencies, Australian Government departments and agencies, and the general public. It conducted public and in camera hearings in Canberra, as well as all mainland capitals, and undertook trips to New Zealand, East and South-East Asia, Western Europe and North America to gather information. Its recommendations were contained in eight reports (some consisting of more than one part) presented between March 1976 and April 1977. Many of these were taken up by the Fraser government.

Records of the RCIS

Records of the RCIS held by the National Archives include reports, submissions, evidence provided at hearings and administrative records. Key records, such as those identified below, have been digitised and are available on the collection database, [RecordSearch](#). Further information about the [RCIS](#) is also available, including background information on the Royal Commission, a brief guide to the records and a podcast by George Brownbill, former Secretary to the RCIS.

Access to records

Many of the records of the RCIS have been made available for public access. Information included on RecordSearch item entries will indicate where exemptions have been applied. The exemptions

include details of relationships between Australian and foreign intelligence agencies; technical, structural details and operational processes of Australian security and intelligence agencies; the names of intelligence officers and agents; and some intelligence reports. An application for access can be lodged for any records that have not been examined.

Key records of the RCIS

Collection references

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Working papers – Royal Commission reports</u>	1901–77	A12393
<u>Briefing and reference material relating to overseas organisations</u>	1920–76	A12390
<u>Exhibits received at Official Hearings</u>	1934–76	A12388
<u>Documents received from the Australian Security and Intelligence agencies</u>	1940–77	A12389
<u>Material relating to history of the Australian Security and Intelligence agencies</u>	1945–76	A12392
<u>Published reports accumulated as reference material</u>	1946–77	A12391
<u>Folder of copies of submissions</u>	1973–75	A12387
<u>Reports</u>	1974–77	A8908
<u>Notes kept by secretary – George Brownbill</u>	1974–77	A12395
<u>Records of evidence given at formal hearings</u>	1975–76	A8913
<u>Correspondence files – Australian agencies</u>	1922–82	A12383
<u>Correspondence files – individual submission files</u>	1933–95	A12385
<u>Correspondence files – alpha primary sequence J to K</u>	1939–77	A12384
<u>Correspondence files – government departments</u>	1949–78	A12381
<u>Correspondence files – administrative files</u>	1969–77	A12386
<u>Correspondence files – security and intelligence agencies</u>	1973–77	A12382

Reports of the RCIS

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>First Report – Procedural matters</u>	1976–76	A8908, 1
<u>Second Report – Security vetting and the question of the establishment of a Security Appeals Tribunal</u>	1976–76	A8908, 2
<u>Second Report – Security vetting and the question of the establishment of a Security Appeals Tribunal (An annex to the Second Report for limited circulation)</u>	1976–76	A8908, 2B
<u>Third Report – Intelligence and co-ordination machinery</u>	1976–76	A8908, 3A
<u>Third Report – Intelligence and co-ordination machinery – abridged findings and recommendations</u>	1976–76	A8908, 3B

<u>Fourth Report – Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation, Vol. 1</u>	1976–76	A8908, 4A
<u>Fourth Report – Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation, Vol. 2 (Appendices 4A to 4L)</u>	1976–76	A8908, 4B
<u>Fourth Report – Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation, Vol. 3 (Appendices 4M to 4R)</u>	1976–76	A8908, 4C
<u>Fourth Report – Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation – supplementary report on ASIO (An additional report on ASIO for limited circulation)</u>	1976–76	A8908, 4D
<u>Fifth Report – Australian Secret Intelligence Service, Vol. 1</u>	1976–76	A8908, 5A
<u>Fifth Report – Australian Secret Intelligence Service, Vol. 2 (Appendices)</u>	1976–76	A8908, 5B
<u>Sixth Report – Defence Signals Directorate, Vol. 1</u>	1977–77	A8908, 6A
<u>Sixth Report – Defence Signals Directorate, Vol. 2 – Appendices 6A to 6K</u>	1977–77	A8908, 6B
<u>Sixth Report – Defence Signals Directorate, Vol. 3 – Appendices 6S, 6T and 6U</u>	1977–77	A8908, 6C
<u>Seventh Report – Australian Intelligence/Security Services 1900–1950 by J Templeton, Vol. 1</u>	1977–77	A8908, 7A
<u>Seventh Report – Australian Intelligence/Security Services 1900–1950 by J Templeton, Vol. 2</u>	1977–77	A8908, 7B
<u>Eighth Report – Disposal and subsequent use of RCIS records</u>	1977–77	A8908