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THE ROLE OF SATELLITES IN PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF AUSTRALIA'S CRITICAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

Abstract

Following the 11 September 2001 terrorists attacks and the 2002 Bali bombings the Australian Government established the Critical Infrastructure Advisory Council (CIAC) and drew up a Critical Infrastructure Strategy. Both had the primary purpose of maintaining the continued operation of the nation's critical infrastructure in the face of all hazards. To support this objective a Trusted Information Sharing Network (TISN) was also established under the umbrella of CIAC. The TISN provides a secure, non-competitive environment in which all stakeholders have the opportunity to work together to ensure the continued operation of critical infrastructure sharing information and tackling business continuity challenges in a secure environment. Members of the TISN include owners and operators of critical infrastructure and representatives from Australian, state and territory government agencies, and peak national bodies. Under the TISN eight standing committees have been established to cover; banking and finance, food and grocery, water, transport, communications, energy, health and the Commonwealth Government. Most have been in operation for nearly a decade.

Now a new group has been established as part of the TISN and under the overall guidance of CIAC; the Space Cross-sectoral Interest Group (Space CSIG). The Space CSIG has been formed in recognition of the essential services provided by space-based systems and technologies, and the potential impacts on critical infrastructure from a major disruption to these systems. The principal focus of the SCIG will be satellites that provide services for position, navigation and timing (PNT), earth observation and communications. Its membership comprises people with expertise in these classes of space assets together with senior people from each of the eight TISN areas.

The Australian, State and Territory governments share the following definition of critical infrastructure:

‘those physical facilities, supply chains, information technologies and communication networks which, if destroyed, degraded or rendered unavailable for an extended period, would significantly impact the social or economic wellbeing of the nation or affect Australia's ability to conduct national defence and ensure national security’.

This paper will review the objectives and intended activities of the SCIG and discuss the importance of the three classes of satellites to Australia's current and future well-being.