



# Media Release

## Senator Mathias Cormann

### *Senator for Western Australia*

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### **FEDERAL LABOR GOING SOFT ON ORGANISED CRIME IN WA!**

The Rudd Government is going soft on organised crime in Western Australia according to WA Senator Mathias Cormann.

This follows revelations in an answer to a question on notice that since coming to office the Rudd Government has halved the number of Australian Crime Commission (ACC) Intelligence Analysts in Western Australia.

“Since the election in November last year the number of Intelligence Analysts employed by the ACC in Western Australia has gone down from ten to only five.

“This sharp reduction in the number of Intelligence Analysts in Western Australia will undermine the fight against organised crime across Australia.

Senator Cormann rejected the Government’s assertions that the positions were no longer required for operational reasons.

“My feedback from within law enforcement circles in WA is that this reduction will have a dramatic and negative impact on current and ongoing ACC operations in Western Australia,” he said.

The ACC was an initiative of the former Howard Government to counter serious and organised crime by working nationally with both federal as well as state and territory agencies.

“It brings together all arms of intelligence gathering and law enforcement to provide a single focus in the fight against serious and organised criminal activity,” Senator Cormann said.

“ACC Intelligence Analysts play a central role in the collection and analysis of information on organised crime, particularly in relation to the trade in illicit drugs, the trade in illicit firearms and the nature and extent of violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities.

“How can the Rudd Government possibly justify cutting such an important resource in half in WA?

“What the Government should be doing is building on the work of the Howard Government by further strengthening our capacity to fight against organised crime out of Western Australia.

“WA represents a third of Australia’s landmass, over 12,000 kilometres of coastline, and has the fastest growing population in Australia.

“The Prime Minister and the Attorney General should immediately review the staffing levels of the Australian Crime Commission in Western Australia or publicly justify this reduction in manpower,” Senator Cormann said.

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SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION

**Question No. 72**

**Senator Cormann asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2008:**

With regard to the number of Intelligence Analysts employed in the Western Australian office of the Australian Crime Commission:

- a) how many were employed on 1 November 2007? Was it 15?
- b) how many were employed on 20 October 2008? Was it the reduced number of 9?
- c) does this reduction in Intelligence Analysts relate to work load changes? If so, how?
- d) is the Commission considering recruiting any additional Intelligence Analysts between now and the end of the calendar year 2008?
- e) if so, how many?

**The answer to the senator's question is as follows:**

- a) Ten
- b) Five
- c) Yes. Due to operational decisions, these positions were no longer required or the workload redistributed to other offices.
- d) No
- e) Nil



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# Rudd cuts a blow to crime fight: police

RONAN O'CONNELL

Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan warned yesterday that the Federal Government's decision to halve the number of Australian Crime Commission officers in WA would be a big setback in the fight against organised crime in the State.

The Rudd Government confirmed yesterday that the number of ACC officers in WA had been reduced from 10 to five, prompting angry responses from Mr O'Callaghan and WA Police Union president Mike Dean, who said the ACC's coercive powers were crucial to tackling organised crime.

The ACC was formed by the Howard government in 2002 as a replacement for the National Crime Authority to counter serious and organised crime by working with Federal, State and Territory police. It has the power

to hold secret hearings at which witnesses can be compelled to give evidence.

Mr O'Callaghan told *The West Australian* the reduction of ACC officers, which is understood to be part of the Rudd Government's across-the-board 2 per cent Budget cuts, would hinder the ability of WA Police to fight the "Mr Bigs" of organised crime.

He said he would voice his disapproval at a meeting of the ACC board, of which he is a member, in Canberra tomorrow.

"I have significant concerns about the reduction in the number of ACC analysts in WA, especially at a time when WA Police are ramping up investigations against organised crime," Mr O'Callaghan said.

Mr Dean said WA Police had relied on the ACC's powers to tackle major cases involving organised crime figures. Joint

operations between the ACC and WA Police had resulted in some of the most significant arrests and drug seizures in the State's history.

"This is a big blow and will put a lot more pressure on and increase the workload of WA Police officers," Mr Dean said.

A spokeswoman for Federal Minister for Home Affairs Bob Debus confirmed the cuts and said staff levels would be monitored "on the basis of need". "The number of analysts in WA has been reduced but it won't have any impact on the level of co-operation with WA Police," she said.

The Rudd Government's move is in stark contrast to a decision by the State Government to release an extra \$6.5 million from the proceeds of crime account to police and the Director of Public Prosecutions.