

## Foreword

Many Australians would be aware of the very good work that our law enforcement authorities do in partnership with their overseas counterparts to fight both domestic and transnational crime.

However, fewer Australians may realise how critical the tool of mutual assistance is to this fight. Mutual assistance is the process countries use to provide and obtain formal Government to Government assistance in criminal investigations and prosecutions.

Without mutual assistance, a successful investigation or prosecution into terrorism, child sex offences or corruption may be frustrated or never even get off the ground.

Mutual assistance is also a key process to recover the proceeds of crime and ensure that Australia is not a safe haven for money launderers.

Criminals should be aware that if they bring the proceeds of their overseas crimes to Australia, our authorities will act together with their foreign counterparts to ensure the proceeds of their crimes are seized.

The *Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act 1987* (Mutual Assistance Act) was introduced almost twenty years ago. Since that time, improved communications, the emergence of new technologies and the growth of international travel has made it more likely for the evidence and proceeds of a crime to be located in different countries.

Since the introduction of the Act, there has also been a dramatic increase in the use of mutual assistance as a tool in the investigation and prosecution of crime. Australia's use of mutual assistance to obtain assistance from overseas has doubled over the past six years alone.

Australia needs an excellent mutual assistance system to ensure that criminals cannot evade prosecution and proceeds of crime confiscation action just because the evidence or proceeds of their crime are in different countries.

That is why we are reviewing Australia's mutual assistance arrangements. We need to ensure these arrangements are as responsive and streamlined as possible to assist in the ongoing fight against domestic and transnational crime. I encourage you to contribute to the Mutual Assistance Review.



**CHRIS ELLISON**  
Minister for Justice and Customs

