

The Joint Intelligence Office, the Joint Intelligence Bureau and the External Intelligence Bureau, 1949–1980: An Insider's Account of the First Three Decades of a Small Intelligence Agency

While much academic and media interest has been shown in the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service and the Government Communications Security Bureau, very little work has been done on a third branch of the New Zealand intelligence tree, the organisation which began life as the Joint Intelligence Office and is now called the National Assessments Bureau. This article uses three papers produced by its first Director, supplemented by documents released to Archives New Zealand, to present an insider's view of its first 30 years.

In the period immediately after the Second World War Britain and the Dominions worked together to develop an agreed Commonwealth approach on defence issues, including the gathering and use of intelligence. These matters were discussed at the meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London in April-May 1946 and at an associated intelligence conference. One outcome of the meetings was that the British Government proposed to its Australian, Canadian and New Zealand counterparts that they set up their own joint intelligence organisations. The function of these bodies would be to 'collate, evaluate and distribute factual intelligence relating to topography, communications, ports and harbours, landing beaches, aviation facilities, defences, economics, industrial and manpower resources and social and constitutional organisations of countries within their agreed areas of responsibility'.¹ As Nicky Hager has stated, these were 'the types of geographical military information which would be needed to fight future wars'.² The area of responsibility New Zealand was expected to cover was based on the long-standing New Zealand Naval Station, including a vast area of the South Pacific, from the Antarctic to north of the equator (figure 1).

The 'principal architect of the scheme' was the Director of the United Kingdom's Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB), Major-General Sir Kenneth Strong.³ Following his visit to New Zealand in 1947, that country's Chiefs of Staff discussed the proposal.⁴ Initially they considered that collecting such information should be a Joint Services task, but ultimately the work was seen as separate from intelligence gathering by both the armed forces and the Department of External Affairs.

However, while Australia soon established its own Joint Intelligence Bureau based in Melbourne, New Zealand dragged its feet. The Chiefs of Staff made various suggestions over the following year (including debating whether New Zealand should help staff the Australian Bureau) and eventually proposed that a Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) be established.⁵ A name was proposed for its staff, the Joint Intelligence Office (JIO), but no papers went to Cabinet and no people were appointed. The result was that 'by 1949 nothing had been done and we were facing increasing pressure to honour our intelligence commitment'.⁶ Following another visit by Major-General Strong, Foss Shanahan (secretary of both the Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff Committee) took the proposal to establish the JIO to Prime Minister Peter Fraser. After being assured that it would require minimal personnel and resources, Fraser agreed, and on 23 February 1949 Cabinet approved the formation of the JIO.⁷

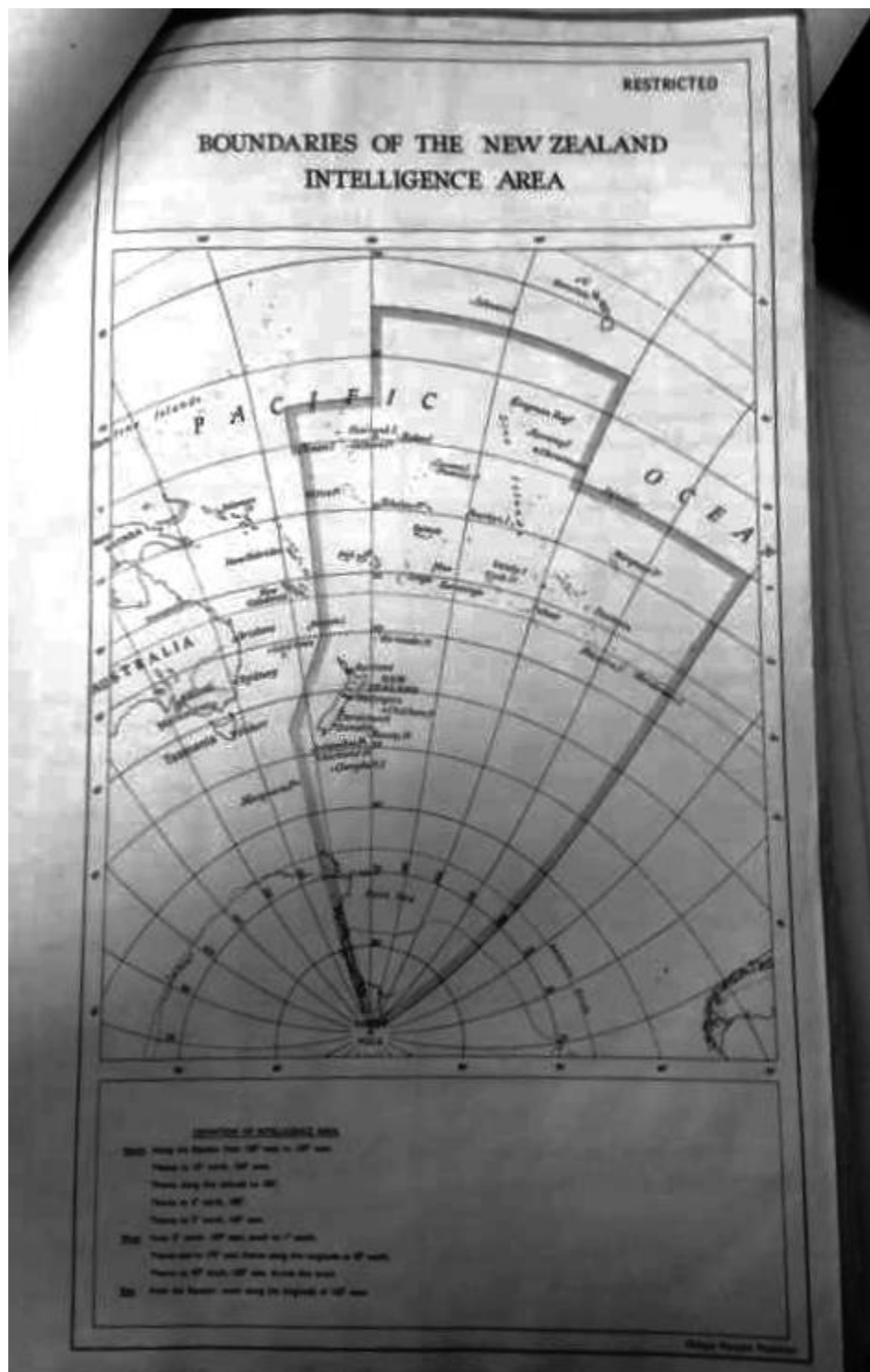


Figure 1 ANZ, R23447132-ABFK-19754-W5767-38-15/2/1-1, 'Intelligence - NZ Joint Intelligence Bureau'.

The next month Major-General Strong reappeared in New Zealand and held discussions with the Chiefs of Staff and the heads of various government departments. He explained the workings of the British JIB and how this could apply in New Zealand. Among other things, he claimed that 'the American equivalent' of the JIB was the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), while noting that it 'was organised on a somewhat extravagant basis and had a world-wide responsibility'.⁸ New Zealand, however, had no such sense of extravagance. In April 1949

Lieutenant-Commander V (Vic) Jaynes, the Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence, was appointed 'on a provisional basis' as Officer in Charge of the JIO, where he would remain for the next 30 years. Jaynes was able to recruit two staff, a research officer (on loan from the Education Department) and a Navy clerk, with additional assistance provided by an Army intelligence officer.⁹ Jaynes later wrote that despite the military appointments, it was a civilian rather than a Services body, and was 'decidedly under the influence of the Prime Minister's/External Affairs Department'.¹⁰ The JIO reported to the newly established Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC).

The first task for the JIO staff was to build a library of reports, publications, maps and photographs about the South Pacific islands in the New Zealand area of responsibility. A comprehensive checklist of subjects of interest was drawn up (figure 2). Information was obtained from Second World War surveys, New Zealand Government departments, the Australian and United Kingdom Joint Intelligence Bureaus and, once a link had been established through the New Zealand Joint Staff Mission in Washington DC, from the CIA and the United States armed forces.¹¹ By July 1950 the JIC could report: 'Quite apart from the local value of the Joint Intelligence Office it is an integral link in the Commonwealth organisation for "JIB" Intelligence.' The report further noted that the main Bureau offices were in London, Ottawa and Melbourne and, at this point, the New Zealand JIO and a Bureau in Singapore acted as 'sub-offices of the Melbourne Bureau with areas of local responsibility'.¹²

Jaynes wrote that the JIO 'had a very modest and uncertain beginning'. By the early 1950s, however, 'events both at home and in Asia were moving in ways that made an intelligence Bureau in New Zealand seem something more than a novelty'.¹³ These events included the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China, insurgencies in Malaya and Vietnam and the Korean War. When that conflict began, with fears of a wider conflagration, the JIO was commissioned to prepare a register of 'Key Points' in New Zealand (including power stations, oil storage tanks, reservoirs, railway bridges, tunnels and wireless/telegraph stations) that may have required protection from possible sabotage. A register was compiled but, as Jaynes later noted, this undertaking 'faded away with the end of hostilities in Korea'.¹⁴

As New Zealand's defence interests shifted to south-east Asia and with growing 'concern over the threat from the Sino-Soviet block', the JIO's area of interest moved beyond the South Pacific.¹⁵ New Zealand policy makers and planners increasingly recognised the importance of having good intelligence about a wider world. The result was that the JIO was established on a permanent basis in 1952, with Jaynes (now a civilian) confirmed as its Director. No longer regarded as a sub-office of the Australian Bureau, in 1953 the JIO was renamed the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB). But although its status was raised and it was publicly acknowledged as part of the Prime Minister's Department, staff numbers remained the same.

The JIB now set about improving its links with its sister organisations in the Western alliances. Around the time New Zealand joined the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1954, the New Zealand JIB followed the example of other Bureaus in making formal arrangements for the exchange of intelligence with the CIA.¹⁶ According to Hager, the head of New Zealand's Joint Military Mission in Washington DC, Brigadier Walter McKinnon, wanted the exchange 'to be through military channels, but the External Affairs Department took over the job'.¹⁷ However, Jaynes has stated that he received a letter from McKinnon 'suggesting we [the JIB] establish relations with the CIA. The Department of External Affairs agreed and so too did the CIA'.¹⁸ From then on, what Jaynes called 'some of the best and brightest talent in External Affairs', including Ralph Mullins, Bryce Harland, Tim Francis and

Richard Nottage, were 'accredited as Intelligence Liaison Officers' to the CIA while serving in New Zealand's Washington Embassy. Jaynes commented that the 'JIB (Wellington) had now become a member of an exclusive "intelligence club" consisting of the Commonwealth JIBs and the CIA' and received a 'steady flow of reports on foreign countries', most notably China, the Soviet Union and those in east and south-east Asia.¹⁹

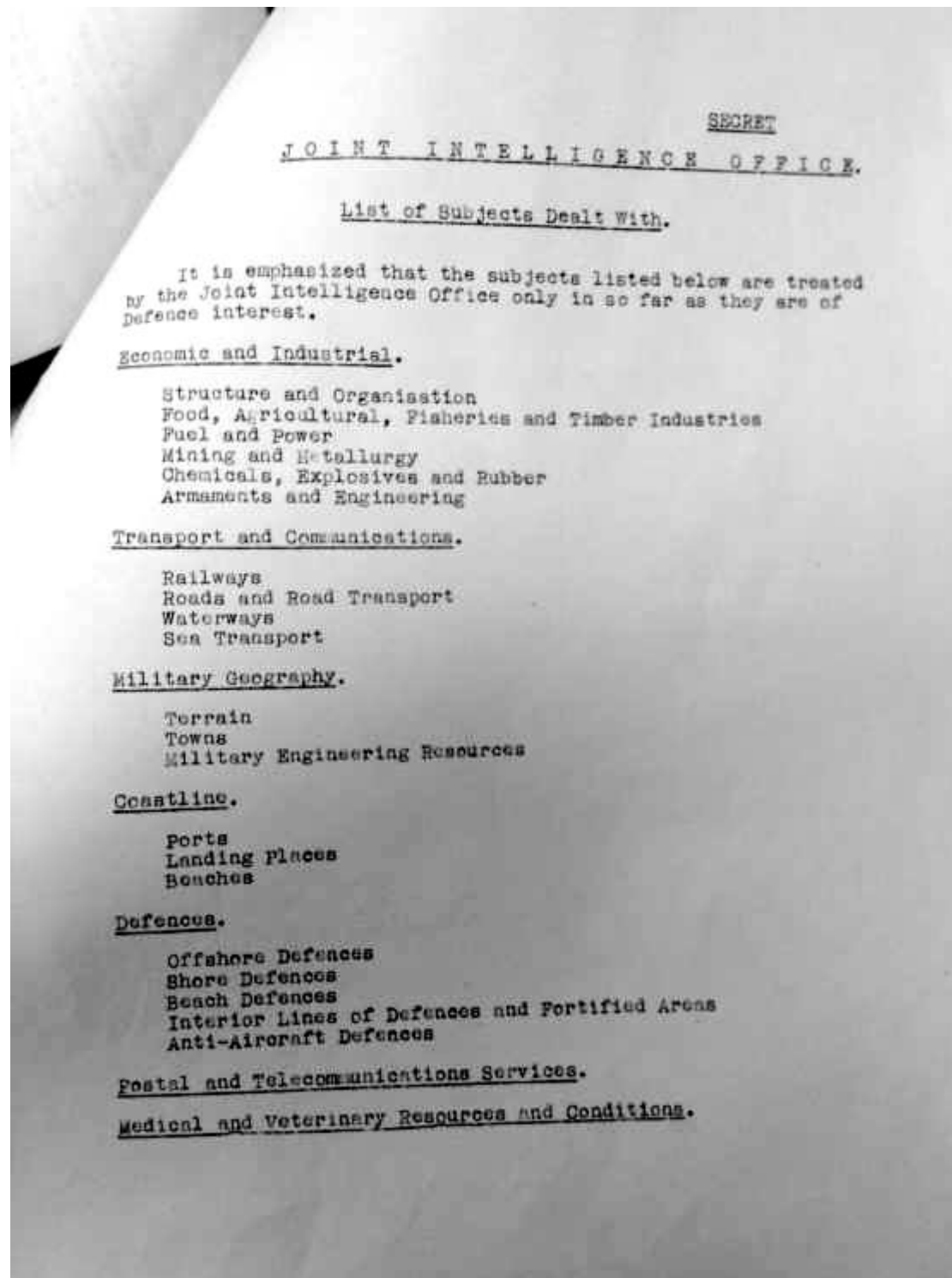


Figure 2 ANZ, R23447132-ABFK-19754-W5767-38-15/2/1-1, 'Intelligence - NZ Joint Intelligence Bureau'.

Further linkages were developed. A 'three-party' intelligence conference, of France, the UK and the USA, had first met in Singapore in 1951. Australian and New Zealand representatives (including Jaynes) attended the fifth meeting at Pearl Harbor in 1953 and the sixth and final meeting in Melbourne in 1955. From 1960 onwards the JIB attended meetings of the SEATO Military Intelligence Committee (before then only New Zealand military intelligence officers had attended). JIB staff also took part in research methods conferences held by the 'intelligence club' in Melbourne (1958), Washington (1962) and London (1966).²⁰

By the late-1950s the Joint Intelligence Committee, supported by the JIB, was meeting 'once or twice a week' and preparing 'intelligence appreciations on distant areas as widely separated as the Antarctic and the Middle East'. The JIB was publishing a weekly bulletin of current intelligence with the assistance of Services intelligence staff and External Affairs. It also produced a 'Current Intelligence Guide' providing 'background information on the geography, economics, politics, foreign relations, defence and leading personalities of the countries of Asia' in which New Zealand was most interested. Servicing the JIC required a great deal of effort from the small JIB, which by 1958 had only five staff, although other departments provided part-time consultants and other forms of assistance.²¹

Jaynes has stated that the JIB received 'a large number of appreciations from equivalent bodies in London, Singapore, Melbourne, Ottawa and Washington'. This 'finished intelligence' was the prime resource for the providing intelligence reports to the New Zealand Government at short notice. The Bureau also handled economic and scientific intelligence from allied agencies and provided material on New Zealand and the South Pacific 'for the military attaches of the United States Embassy' in Wellington. Jaynes felt the JIB should be more involved in 'the procurement and collation of intelligence on the Antarctic', but he lacked the resources for this task. Nevertheless, when Wellington was visited in 1958 by two of the Soviet Union's larger oceanographic research vessels and the Slava Whaling Flotilla, the JIB was fully involved in the 'opportunities for gathering intelligence' that the ship visit provided.²²

The Bureau was caught up in the major structural changes in New Zealand defence in the mid-1960s, which combined the three Service departments into a single Ministry of Defence. The proposal had included a recommendation to transfer the JIB to the new Ministry. Despite Jaynes arguing that the Bureau was 'a national activity serving civilian Departments equally with Service Departments', the transfer took place in 1965. The JIB, however, continued to receive its direction and guidance 'from the Prime Minister's Department, External Affairs Department, and Ministry of Defence, acting conjointly' and its 'essentially civilian character' was retained.²³

During the 1960s and 1970s key areas of interest for the JIB were the Vietnam War and its wider effects, and French nuclear testing. The Bureau acquired its first scientific intelligence officer and produced reports for New Zealand and its allies on the French testing programme. Nuclear tests conducted by the Soviet Union and China were also of interest, as was Soviet test-launching of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Jaynes noted that the JIB shared intelligence on these matters with 'the scientific and technical divisions of our overseas associates'.²⁴ Relations with the Australian Bureau remained close and an Australian officer was seconded to its New Zealand counterpart. Australia asked New Zealand 'if we would relieve them of the responsibility for producing intelligence on New Caledonia, the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands, in effect shifting westwards by about 10 degrees of longitude the western border of our intelligence area'. A memorandum of understanding to this effect was concluded at a meeting in Canberra in December 1972.²⁵ The JIB introduced a

monthly review, 'South Pacific Intelligence Notes', and expanded its series of reports on the various islands in its area of responsibility.

In 1974 Prime Minister Norman Kirk decided to review New Zealand's external intelligence services and a senior diplomat, Tim Francis, was assigned the task. One outcome of the review was that the JIB returned to the Prime Minister's Department and was renamed the External Intelligence Bureau (EIB). Jaynes later remarked that this 'was to function not only as an intelligence research organisation but also as a coordinating body capable of assembling information from a number of sources'.²⁶ With a New Zealand Intelligence Council now providing oversight of the country's intelligence activities, the Joint Intelligence Committee was abolished.

International links had continued to expand, with staff from the JIB/EIB being posted to Australia, to SEATO headquarters in Bangkok, and to various New Zealand South Pacific Missions. EIB representatives attended ANZUK (Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) intelligence meetings from 1975 to 1979, as well as meetings with the national intelligence agencies of several south-east Asian countries. According to Jaynes, the talks 'gave us valuable insights' into the way these countries viewed China, the Soviet Union and developments in Vietnam. Intelligence meetings also occurred with experts from Australia and the United States, including the CIA and the United States Defence Intelligence Agency. After the 1979 meeting the leader of the US delegation complimented the quality of the EIB's perspective, 'due he thought to our ability to look at the world in larger terms' than most of his own analysts.²⁷

By the time Jaynes retired in 1980, the EIB was a respected member of the New Zealand and allied intelligence scene. Its staff numbers had risen to around 30, the same as its present-day successor, the National Assessments Bureau. The EIB had close connections with other government departments, and had personnel seconded to it from Foreign Affairs, Defence, Industries and Commerce, and Lands and Survey.²⁸ Its well established position was a far cry from its 'modest and uncertain beginning' three decades earlier.

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- ¹ Archives New Zealand (ANZ), R23447132-ABFK-19754-W5767-38-15/2/1-1, 'Intelligence - NZ Joint Intelligence Bureau'.
- ² Nicky Hager, 'The Origins of Signals Intelligence in New Zealand', *Centre for Peace Studies*, Working Paper No.5 (1995), p.21.
- ³ Vic Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', p.2, Security Papers Collection, Victoria University of Wellington.
- ⁴ ANZ, R23447132.
- ⁵ ANZ, R23447132.
- ⁶ Jaynes, 'Origins of the JIB/EIB', p.1, Security Papers Collection, Victoria University of Wellington.
- ⁷ ANZ, R23447132.
- ⁸ ANZ, R23447132.
- ⁹ ANZ, R23447132.
- ¹⁰ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', p.3.
- ¹¹ ANZ, R23447132.
- ¹² ANZ, R23447132.
- ¹³ Jaynes, 'Origins of the JIB/EIB', pp.1-2.
- ¹⁴ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', pp.3-4.
- ¹⁵ [Vic Jaynes], 'The Problems of a Small Bureau', Research Methods Conference, Melbourne, November 1958, p.8, Security Papers Collection, Victoria University of Wellington.
- ¹⁶ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', p.6.
- ¹⁷ Hager, 'The Origins of Signals Intelligence in New Zealand', p.21.
- ¹⁸ Jaynes, 'Origins of the JIB/EIB', p.2.
- ¹⁹ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', p.6.
- ²⁰ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', pp.11, 13.
- ²¹ [Jaynes], 'The Problems of a Small Bureau', pp.8-9, 15.
- ²² [Jaynes], 'The Problems of a Small Bureau', pp.8, 10-11, 14.
- ²³ Ministry of Defence, Administration of the Joint Intelligence Bureau (New Zealand), 1 March 1965, Security Papers Collection, Victoria University of Wellington; Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', pp.6-7.
- ²⁴ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', p.8; Hager, *Secret Power* (Nelson: Craig Potton Publishing, 1996), pp.102, 269.
- ²⁵ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', p.8.
- ²⁶ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', p.9.
- ²⁷ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', pp.10-13.
- ²⁸ Jaynes, 'Origins of the External Assessments Bureau; the first 30 years', p.10.