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WHERE EXPERTS CONNECT

AIMPAC: ELEVATING THE STANDARDS OF AUSTRALIA'S INVESTIGATIVE AND MERCANTILE PROFESSIONS

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INSIGHTS FROM NIIC 2025

By Nadia Rodcharoen

AUSTRALIA'S LEADING INVESTIGATIVE AND MERCANTILE CONFERENCE DELIVERS ANOTHER STANDOUT YEAR

The **National Intelligence and Investigations Conference (NIIC) 2025** has officially wrapped, and what a powerful event it was.

Held on the Gold Coast and completely sold out, NIIC 2025 brought together professionals from across the investigations, mercantile, collections, and financial sectors. This year's conference was more than just a gathering, it was a clear sign that our industry is growing, evolving, and demanding better standards.

From early-morning sessions to the evening networking drinks, the energy in the room was undeniable. We heard from experts across the country delivering practical insights that will shape how we operate in the field and manage compliance in an increasingly complex environment.

Recognising Industry Leadership

Two standout professionals were acknowledged this year for their service to the industry.

Richard James and **Amy Elliott** were presented with awards in recognition of their efforts to strengthen the profession. Both have played a leading role in advocating for practical, ethical standards and lobbying regulators on behalf of working agents.

Their commitment ensures that the voices of investigators, mercantile agents, and field operatives are heard where it matters most.

Introducing AIMPAC

A key highlight of the day was the official announcement of the **Association for Investigators, Mercantile Professionals and Compliance (AIMPAC) Inc.**

Created to raise standards, protect members, and provide access to real support and training, AIMPAC is now Australia's most proactive industry association. The response from attendees was immediate and overwhelmingly positive.

To learn more or become a member, visit aimpac.com.au.

Looking to 2026

Thanks to strong demand and outstanding feedback, planning for **NIIC 2026** is already underway. Next year's event will feature increased capacity and new opportunities for learning and collaboration.

To everyone who supported, attended, or helped make NIIC 2025 a success, thank you. Your presence and passion continue to move the industry forward.

We look forward to seeing you next year.

The NIIC and AIMPAC Team

AIMPAC:

Elevating the Standards of Australia's Investigative and Mercantile Professions

In an industry where regulation is tightening and expectations are rising, professionals in investigations, field services, and debt recovery are often left to navigate high-risk environments with minimal support. That is where AIMPAC steps in.

The **Association for Investigators, Mercantile Professionals and Compliance (AIMPAC) Inc.** is Australia's new national body dedicated to raising the standards of our industry. Created by professionals, for professionals, AIMPAC brings together licensed agents, investigators, field operatives, and mercantile agents from across the country, united by a commitment to ethical practice, continual professional development, and industry reform.

Join AIMPAC today for just $650 (no GST) and gain immediate access to powerful industry support, resources, and networking opportunities.

JOIN AIMPAC →

A National Voice for a Growing Industry

AIMPAC was established to meet the real-world challenges faced by professionals on the ground. From changing legal obligations to rising public expectations, our industry needs a central voice that not only supports its members, but also helps regulate compliance and hold others accountable.

Our mission is simple:

- Promote ethical, compliant practice
- Provide access to industry-specific education and tools
- Build a connected, professional community
- Represent members at a national level

Whether you are a sole operator, agency owner, or contract field agent, AIMPAC is here to ensure you are not operating alone.

Member Benefits That Make an Impact

Free CPD Compliance Training
AIMPAC members receive unlimited access to professional development courses covering the most critical areas of compliance and operational risk. Courses include:

- Domestic and Family Violence Refresher
- Debt Collection Guidelines Refresher
- Evidence Handling and Storage
- Internal Dispute Resolution (RG 271)
- Privacy and Conduct Compliance
- Google Search Mastery for Investigators
- Private Investigator Refresher Training

All training is online, CPD-accredited, and designed for the Australian regulatory environment.

Professional Tools and Templates

Get access to practical, time-saving resources such as:

- OSINT search tools
- Skip tracing calculators
- Statement and affidavit templates
- Pre-text and engagement scripts
- Investigation logs and field checklists

These resources are updated regularly to ensure you are equipped with the latest best practices.

Networking, Support and Representation

AIMPAC offers opportunities to connect with peers across Australia through:

- Online member forums
- Virtual and in-person meetings
- Access to the National Intelligence and Investigation Conference (NIIC)
- Industry working groups and collaboration opportunities

Partnerships That Work for You

AIMPAC only partners with organisations that directly benefit our members. Our current industry partners include:

- **Express Insurance:** Fast, affordable insurance designed for investigators and contractors
- **Loan Hive:** A finance broking company with access to over 50 lenders and thousands of loan products, offering AIMPAC members complimentary loan reviews.
- **Steer Safely:** Behavioural and medical risk driver training, with plans for AIMPAC subsidies to make this training more accessible
- **Meyer West IP:** Members get a free 1-hour consultation to discuss their IP enquiry and will provide a 15% discount on our professional fees for filing trade mark applications.

DRIVING SKILLS THAT COULD SAVE A PI'S LIFE

BY STEWART NICHOLLS

Evasive Manoeuvres

If you have watched any kind of movie depicting a private investigator, there always ends up being some kind of car chase. The bad guys are chasing the good guys who are trying to get away, we see many vehicles being wrecked and it keeps us in suspense like a good action movie should.

However, Hollywood is far from reality, indeed many people who have driving skills for the road are not equipped for such encounters including the moving parts of our road system.

A chance encounter at a Business Chamber meeting with very experienced Private Investigator Amy Elliott proved to be an interesting insight into the real world of a working PI.

But that discussion also highlighted the challenges private investigators go through, and while the Hollywood scenarios aren't exactly the norm, having more advanced driving skills are warranted. Indeed, at the very least a PI can be driving around distracted or exposed to another driver being erratic.

While every precaution can be taken to minimise the threat that can come from a job, it is never ever eliminated, and this is where upskilling is necessary. Think of it this way, if you are being perused by a target you have just served a summons to, or you have been caught taking pictures and they are disgruntled. Getting away safely is your highest priority.

But, think about it, if you crash while trying to escape that leaves you in the hands of the very thing you are trying to escape. So, the emphasis on staying safe and staying out of trouble is a high priority.

Having trained executive transport teams and worked with past VIP escorts who drove the Prime Minister around I can assure you the number one threat in such a situation is our own actions.

After our chat Amy took the initiative and booked into our Defensive Driving Program, this is where she learned the art of emergency braking, refining her skills and learning stopping distances from up to 100km/h. We also showed her how to use the correct techniques to avoid an accident and maintain control while swerving, something many people struggle with.

Following on from that Amy then stepped into our Advanced Driving Program where we showed high level cornering techniques, hard acceleration and braking into corners. These techniques are designed to give the participant an accelerated learning pathway of performance driving tactics.

Amy was so impressed with the programs she passed our details onto Brad Lyons, and after a meeting we agreed the AIMPAC association was the perfect place to offer members a discount off the same programs Amy completed.

What many people overlook is the need to keep safe while at work, even if you work for yourself, you still have to adhere to the WHS act and that requires due diligence. If you employ other's, you are responsible for their safety and the WHS act mentions driving.

While you never intend on crashing while driving, the risks are real and the consequences are high, if not extreme.

Our mission is to create safer drivers with education and skill enhancement, so it is an absolute privilege to be able to offer AIMPAC members the opportunity to complete this training.

While you may think you are a great driver, there are always more things you can learn and this includes understanding new vehicle technology, like ABS, ESC, and what they do when you are trying to get away from a target.

Remember reducing risk is everyone's responsibility and while you aren't stunt drivers in a Hollywood action movie, having the right skills for the job is very much achievable.

Best Regards,
Stewart Nicholls
Managing Director
www.Steersafely.com.au

STEER SAFELY

DEFENSIVE DRIVING PROGRAM UPCOMING EVENT

Date: 25 July 2025

Sydney Dragway Eastern Creek, Ferrers Rd, Eastern Creek NSW 2766

More Info

SHARPENING THE EDGE: OSINT TIPS AND TRICKS FOR INVESTIGATORS

Open Source Intelligence, or OSINT, has become an essential skill for modern investigators. Whether you are working a skip trace, background check, fraud case, or surveillance job, the ability to gather accurate, publicly available information online can make or break your case.

But real OSINT is not just about Googling a name. It is about knowing where to look, how to refine your searches, and how to connect the dots. Below are some practical and proven OSINT techniques tailored for Australian investigators and field agents.

1. Master Advanced Google Operators

Google is still one of the most powerful OSINT tools available, but only if you know how to direct it. Try:

- site:facebook.com "John Smith" Ipswich
  Search for a person within a specific site and location.
- intitle:"index of" "passport" OR "drivers license"
  Locate open directories accidentally exposing documents.
- filetype:pdf resume "security officer" Brisbane
  Search for resumes to uncover employment history or aliases.

Use quotes for exact matches and combine terms with AND, OR, and - to include or exclude keywords for tighter control.

2. Search Archived Web Pages

People often delete posts or websites during or after an investigation. That does not mean they are gone.

- **Wayback Machine** (https://archive.org) offers snapshots of millions of websites.
- **Archive Today** (https://archive.md) lets you view or create preserved versions of web pages.
- **CachedView** displays the last version stored by Google.
- Use cache:url in Google search to pull up an indexed snapshot of a page.

Archived content can help verify deleted claims, identify business misrepresentations, or preserve evidence before it disappears.

3. Extract Data from HTML and Page Source

Right-click and choose “View Page Source,” or press Ctrl+U on a browser to open the raw HTML. Many people overlook this, but it can reveal:

- Hidden email addresses by searching for @
- Links to documents like .pdf, .jpg, or .mp4
- Usernames and IDs buried in JSON-LD metadata or script tags

This technique is especially useful when analyzing online profiles, scraped listings, or business websites.

4. Monitor Changes and Set Alerts

Keep tabs on a person, business, or organisation over time by using tools that track changes:

- **VisualPing** or **Wachete** can alert you when a specific web page changes.
- **Google Alerts** will notify you when new content mentions your keywords or subjects.
- **TweetDeck** and **Twitter's Advanced Search** are helpful for digging up deleted or old posts.

Monitoring patterns can help confirm location history, employment updates, or sudden online activity after a period of silence.

5. Use Data Enrichment Tools (Cautiously)

Free tools can add value to your findings, but always double-check their results:

- **Hunter.io** can help identify email patterns used by organisations.
- **HaveIBeenPwned.com** reveals whether an email or phone number has been exposed in a breach.
- **Scamwatch.gov.au** can be used to check for reports tied to a business name or phone number.

Always cross-reference with official databases such as ASIC, ABN Lookup, land title records, or court dockets.

6. Paid Databases and OSINT: A Two-Way Flow

Tools like **Detective Desk** offer verified data sets like phone numbers, addresses, and financial records. These platforms are incredibly useful, but they do not replace OSINT, and OSINT does not compete with them.

Instead, the two work hand in hand.

- Use OSINT to uncover leads, associates, usernames, locations, or aliases, then plug those details into your paid database to validate and convert them into contactable, usable data.
- Take verified information from your paid database and use OSINT to expand it, discover social media accounts, habits, connected businesses, or lifestyle patterns.

The strongest investigations come from the **interplay** of verified data and open-source discovery. OSINT builds the story. Paid databases give it proof.

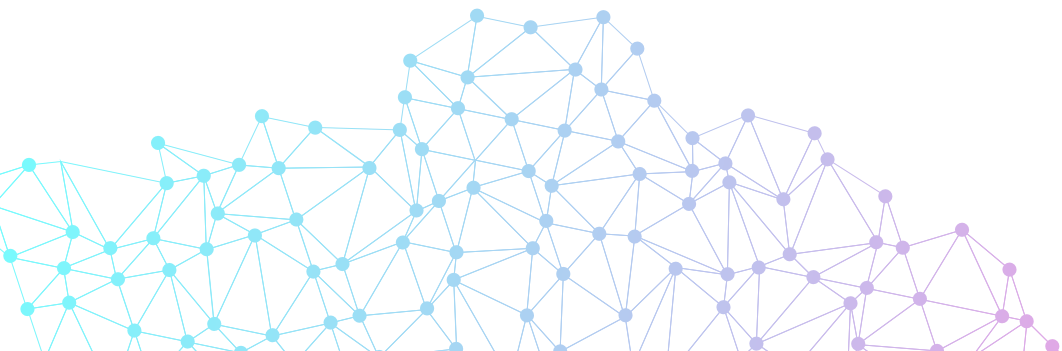
Final Thoughts

OSINT is more than clever searching. It is a discipline that blends skill, patience, and instinct. The best investigators do not just look things up, they map patterns, uncover relationships, and follow trails others miss.

As part of your professional growth, make time to practice. Set challenges. Revisit old files with fresh eyes. Experiment with tools you have not used before. And always think in terms of layers, what you can see, what is behind it, and what it connects to.

For AIMPAC members, our online toolkit provides curated OSINT platforms, walkthroughs, and templates to help you work efficiently and ethically, every step of the way.

Want more OSINT training or a downloadable checklist? Reach out to the AIMPAC team and strengthen your digital investigation game.



NEW COURSE LAUNCH: PRIVACY & CONDUCT COMPLIANCE TRAINING FOR INVESTIGATORS, AGENTS, AND DEBT PROFESSIONALS

AIMPAC is proud to announce the launch of its newest professional development course: Privacy & Conduct Compliance Training. Developed by Tracers.au and aligned with Australian legislation, this course is tailored for field agents, debt collectors, process servers, and private investigators who work with sensitive personal information.

In today's compliance-focused environment, it is no longer enough to simply get the job done. You must also demonstrate that you understand the legal standards for collecting, storing, using, and sharing private data, and that your conduct aligns with national expectations for professional behaviour.

Why This Course Matters

Every day, professionals in our industry locate people, manage financial issues, and interact directly with the public. Whether you are serving documents, tracing a debtor, or conducting background checks, you are handling personal information, and the law is very clear about how that information must be treated.

This course ensures you understand those legal requirements and can apply them confidently in real-world field situations.

What You Will Learn

The course is practical, relevant, and built for professionals working in the field. Key topics include:

- The Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)
- Identifying personal and sensitive information
- Knowing what you can legally collect
- Secure storage and handling practices
- When and how to lawfully disclose information
- Surveillance and data collection laws by state
- Responding to complaints or investigations
- Applying the ACCC/ASIC Debt Collection Guidelines

Assessment and Certification

At the end of the course, you will complete a final assessment. A passing score of 80 percent is required to receive your certificate.

For AIMPAC members, your CPD points will be recorded automatically and your certificate will be saved to your member dashboard.

CYBERSECURITY: SAFEGUARDING CLIENT DATA IN A DIGITAL AGE

In today's investigative world, digital threats are becoming just as dangerous as physical ones. For private investigators and field agents, cybersecurity is no longer a luxury. It is a critical layer of protection for sensitive client data, case files, and your own operational safety.

Handling legal documents, surveillance reports, financial records, and personal information puts you at risk. A single breach could expose your clients, damage your reputation, and potentially lead to legal consequences.

In May 2025, researchers uncovered a massive data leak involving over **184 million login credentials.** These included access to email accounts, cloud drives, and social media platforms such as Google, Microsoft, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Dropbox.

This wasn't the result of a single high-profile hack. The source was **infostealer malware** — malicious programs silently installed on everyday devices through fake downloads, email attachments, and browser extensions. Once installed, the malware harvested everything from saved passwords and browser cookies to cloud login tokens and synced documents.

In a separate report, cybersecurity analysts confirmed that **over 19 billion passwords** were leaked online between April 2024 and April 2025. An overwhelming **94 percent** of them were reused or easily guessable. This means attackers didn't even need to target specific individuals. They simply scanned through breached data and looked for reused logins.

What This Means for Investigators and Agents

Imagine you're working on a sensitive fraud case. Your field notes, evidence photos, and client documents are saved in your cloud drive. You download what looks like a useful free tool or open an email from a fake client. Malware installs quietly and collects everything, your passwords, your case files, even your backup email codes.
Now someone has access to your case information, your cloud accounts, and your client history. They might sell that data, lock you out, or expose it publicly. This kind of breach has already happened to several small agencies and solo operators in Australia in the past 18 months.

How the Data Was Stolen

The 184 million stolen credentials were not collected using sophisticated techniques. Attackers used simple but effective methods like:

- Fake PDF tools, video converters, or cracked software
- Malicious browser extensions
- Phishing emails pretending to be from government services, Stripe, PayPal, or clients
- Password managers built into web browsers, which store passwords in plain text

Once the malware was installed, it quietly collected saved passwords, login cookies, and autofill data. In many cases, it also scanned for documents and uploaded them to attacker-controlled servers.

What You Can Do to Protect Yourself

Whether you work alone or in a small team, you can still create strong digital security habits. These simple steps will protect you and your clients.

✅ **Use a Password Manager**
Avoid saving passwords in your browser. Use a secure password manager like Bitwarden, 1Password, or NordPass. These tools encrypt your login details and protect them even if your device is compromised**.**

✅ **Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)**
Turn on 2FA on all accounts, especially your email, cloud storage, and banking. Use apps like Authy or Google Authenticator, not SMS codes, which can be intercepted.

✅ **Keep Your Software Updated**
Make sure your phone, computer, browser, and apps are always running the latest version. Updates fix security flaws that hackers often exploit.

✅ **Avoid Reusing Passwords**
Create a unique password for every service you use. If one account gets compromised, your others will still be safe.

✅ **Use Encrypted Storage for Case Files**
Never store sensitive case files in unprotected folders like your desktop or downloads. Use encrypted storage tools or password-protected archives.

✅ **Be Wary of Downloads and Links**
Do not install browser extensions you don't need. Avoid clicking links in emails from unknown senders. If in doubt, verify by phone before opening.

✅ **Scan for Malware Regularly**
Run antivirus and anti-malware scans weekly. Tools like Malwarebytes, Windows Security, or ESET can detect hidden threats early.

Cybersecurity is Now Part of the Job

As an investigator, your credibility rests not only on what you uncover, but on how well you protect the information entrusted to you. Every file you hold, every message you send, and every image you store could have serious consequences if exposed. Clients, regulators, and courts do not just hope you take data security seriously, they expect it.

Being a solo operator or part of a small team does not make you less visible. In fact, it often makes you more vulnerable. Cybercriminals deliberately target smaller practices because they know security systems are often limited, overlooked, or outdated.

The good news is that you do not need expensive software or an in-house IT department to stay secure. Protection starts with small, consistent habits. Use strong passwords. Do not save logins in your browser. Be cautious with downloads. Encrypt sensitive files.

Cybersecurity is now a core part of your professional duty. It is not just about protecting your reputation, it is about protecting your clients, your evidence, and your integrity.

Make sure that trust is earned and maintained with every case you take on.

TRACERS AUSTRALIA