

**Mr Lewis:** That would be true, Senator. If an individual had a very traceable and auditable background, it is quite clear to me that our investigators would move more quickly through that case than if they had to go and find that documentation, as I say, generally, through second and third countries.

**CHAIR:** Are you able to say that the countries of origin of people that have been investigated that have no papers are somewhere where you could get to Indonesia or Sri Lanka without a flight?

**Mr Lewis:** I don't think I could comment on that Senator; I'm not sure.

**CHAIR:** I'd ask you to take it on notice, only I'm not quite sure what you would take on notice—how you would become involved. You would only become involved if the Department of Home Affairs asked you to?

**Mr Lewis:** If it was referred to us, yes.

**CHAIR:** I will leave it at that. Senator Carr.

**Senator KIM CARR:** Mr Lewis, you were commenting in your opening remarks about the fact that ASIO has a very long history—70 years, you said. You were saying how important it was to maintain public confidence in ASIO, particularly in this parliament, by which I took you to mean—and perhaps you could correct me if I'm mistaken—across-the-board support, bipartisan support, for the work of ASIO. Was that correct?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, Senator, I spoke about the support of the parliament for ASIO.

**Senator KIM CARR:** And that included a broad cross-section of the parliament and, when I say bipartisan, I mean both the government and the opposition.

**Mr Lewis:** I think 'the parliament' implies that it's everybody sitting in either house of this place.

**Senator KIM CARR:** Would it be fair to say that throughout the history of ASIO that has not always been the case?

**Mr Lewis:** Absolutely. Sadly, a cursory read of our official history will show you some of the awkward times that we've had as an organisation, and I for one would never want to return to those times.

**Senator KIM CARR:** Exactly. From what I know of your work after working with you in government, I would understand exactly what you mean, and that's why I might offer a view to you that I'm sure you would be very concerned—

**CHAIR:** No, offer a question.

**Senator KIM CARR:** I put this to you: that's why I understood you to be saying why you are so concerned about the report that appeared in *The Australian* identifying ASIO as the source of the material—a classified report—appearing on the front page of *The Australian* newspaper. Is that a fair reading of your response?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, and I hope I made it plain in my opening remarks that the advice that ASIO gave was not what was represented on the front page of *The Australian* newspaper.

**Senator KIM CARR:** So the report was inaccurate; that's the first point. The second is that it is absolutely counter to your purpose in the political system in this country to provide partisan advice of the type that was presented in that report.

**Mr Lewis:** I just go back to what I said before: it is very important that the parliament, everybody in it and all those people that parliamentarians represent—the whole of the Australian community—have confidence in the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. It is unhelpful, in my view, when inaccurate reports circulate. As you know, they can gather momentum through time.

**Senator KIM CARR:** Yes.

**Mr Lewis:** I just want to make sure that the record is put straight: the advice that ASIO gave in this particular case was confined to the application of the ASIO Act in the miscellaneous measures bill.

**Senator KIM CARR:** The history of this bill is quite an interesting one. It was actually a tidy-up bill, a non-controversial bill.

**CHAIR:** Do you have a question?

**Senator KIM CARR:** I'm just reinforcing what the director-general's saying.

**CHAIR:** No. As I said at the opening, we're here to ask questions and leave the political statements somewhere else.

**Senator KIM CARR:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. I'll do my very best to get through this as quickly as I can, and perhaps you could do the same. Mr Lewis, the report was subsequently declassified. Were you consulted about the declassification of that material?