



Director-General of Security – Opening Statement
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs
Budget Estimates – 29 May 2024

Good afternoon. Thank you Chair.

Dramatic shifts in geopolitics, technologies and capabilities have transformed the security environment since Ben Chifley established ASIO 75 years ago. But our mission remains the same: we protect Australia and Australians from threats to their security.

In a complex, challenging and changing security environment, threats to our way of life represent Australia's principal security concern. Based on what ASIO is identifying, investigating, assessing and disrupting, more Australians are being targeted for espionage and foreign interference than ever before.

At the same time threats to life are an enduring priority.

The national terrorism threat level is POSSIBLE because our subject matter experts – who have access to all available intelligence – continue to assess there is a realistic possibility

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of a terrorist attack or attack planning here in the next 12 months.

When we lowered the threat level we indicated our greatest concern involved an individual or small group moving to violence with little or no warning, using a readily available weapon such as a knife.

Unfortunately this is what played out recently in Western Sydney.

ASIO will always maintain a robust and mature counter-terrorism capability – as we demonstrated with our response to the Sydney attack – even when espionage and foreign interference represents our greatest security concern.

The scale and sophistication of the threats facing Australia requires an equally scaled and sophisticated response.

The TOP SECRET-Privileged Access Vetting Authority is part of this response.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Gus Gilmore, who was recently appointed to the role of Deputy Director-General Vetting Services Delivery in ASIO.

Security is a shared responsibility.

Our mission is enabled by our people, practices, technology and partnerships, as well as trust, governance, accountability, transparency and oversight.

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While all of these things are vital, our most important asset – our most critical capability – is our people.

Their ongoing dedication, innovation, agility and ingenuity is a golden thread that runs through the 75 years of ASIO's history.

The security challenges confronting Australia are significant but not insurmountable.

In its 75th year, ASIO remains well placed to secure Australia and protect its people.

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