



The peak body for security professionals

Australian Security Industry Association Limited (ASIAL) Submission to:

Inquiry into the capability of law enforcement to respond to cybercrime

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About the Australian Security Industry Association Limited (ASIAL)

ASIAL is the peak national body representing security professionals in Australia. The Association is comprised of over 2,700 members ranging from large corporate entities to small and medium sized operations.

ASIAL is:

- ✓ a Registered Organisation of Employers under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*
- ✓ an Approved Security Industry Association under security legislation in the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and Victoria
- ✓ an accredited Registrar under the Australian Communications & Media Authority (ACMA) *Cabling Provider Rules*



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Australian Security Industry Association Limited

Security Industry House
41 Hume Street, Crows Nest, NSW 2065

ABN: 91 000 813 365

Phone: 1300 127 425

Email:

Web: www.asial.com.au

Inquiry into the capability of law enforcement to respond to cybercrime

Introduction

The Australian Security Industry Association Limited (ASIAL) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement Inquiry into the capability of law enforcement to respond to cybercrime.

As the peak national body for security professionals in Australia, ASIAL is committed to developing and promoting the highest professional standards in the industry. ASIAL provides a key leadership role in driving industry professionalism and best practice through the development of industry standards, codes of practice and accreditation programs.

ASIAL's 2,700 members account for approximately 85% of the industry in Australia. Our members provide a broad range of services and perform a vital role as part of Australia's national security mix. This includes the provision of a wide range of services to government, business and domestic customers.

Security Industry overview

The private security industry performs a vital frontline role as part of Australia's national security mix, providing services to watch, guard and protect property and people 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. At 31 December 2022 there were 12,744 licensed security companies and 155,562 licensed security personnel in Australia, generating revenue in excess of \$11 billion per annum.

The industry performs an increasingly diverse range services to Australian businesses, government and the broader community. Among these include:

- **Protective security** - protecting crowded places, shopping centres, hospitals, critical infrastructure, utilities, military bases, licensed premises, airports, ports, courts, manufacturing facilities and offices.
- **Electronic security** – installation, maintenance and monitoring of electronic security systems including access control, alarms, Biometrics and video surveillance systems.
- **Physical security** – installation and maintenance of locks, fencing, bollards and barrier security solutions.
- **Cyber security** – technologies, processes and practices to protect networks, computers, programs and data from attack, damage or unauthorized access.

Ensuring there is a professional and sustainable industry capable of servicing the needs of business, government and the community across protective, electronic, physical and cyber security domains is critical to the effective functioning of the Australian economy.

Inquiry into the capability of law enforcement to respond to cybercrime

As acknowledged in the recently released 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy, cyber security is an urgent priority that needs to be addressed. As the cyber threat continues to grow, with artificial intelligence and machine learning bringing new kinds of risks, there is a need to build cyber capability and capacity. A critical element of this is developing a robust cyber security sector with a professional workforce capable of meeting the demands of business and government.

Whilst the protective, electronic and physical security sectors are regulated, cyber security is not. As the worlds of protective, electronic, physical and cyber security converge, there is a need for action now to strengthen Australia's security mix.

In support of law enforcement capability to respond to cybercrime, ASIAL has long called for cyber security professionals, as a minimum to be required to undertake a probity check to ensure they are fit and proper persons. The lack of probity checking for those working in cyber security roles creates vulnerabilities in Australia's security arrangements.

The recognition and regulation of a cyber security professional, within the existing regulated framework of private security licensing, would provide a cost-effective approach and support the identification of legitimate providers of cyber security services.

The regulation of cyber security professionals would support the 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy. In particular, it would provide an underpinning framework to support the application of organisations and agencies meeting the compliance requirements of the Security of Critical Infrastructure legislation in Australia.

As part of a nationally consistent and integrated approach to strengthening Australia's security arrangements, ASIAL has drafted a 'Model' National Private Security Act. The draft seeks to act as a catalyst to progress development and an implementation of a single 'Model' national law for regulation of Australia's rapidly growing private security industry. Cyber security and many IT applications now form an integral part of the private security industry. Failure to recognise and include minimum standards of at least 'fit and proper persons' will further place Australia at risk of cybercrime, criminal infiltration and barriers for law enforcement to respond appropriately to cybercrime.

In developing a 'Model' Act ASIAL is seeking to strengthen Australia's security capability by introducing nationally consistent professional standards for the private security industry.

Key features of ASIAL's Model Act include:

- Implementing **nationally consistent professional standards** to deliver improved security outcomes;
- Establishing a **national register of licensed security personnel** (including cyber security professionals) to create a single, centralised resource which in times of major conflict could be drawn on to benefit the nation;
- **Addressing public safety concerns over issues such as probity**, individual and business suitability, fingerprinting, training, the use of criminal intelligence, compliance and enforcement;
- The **exclusion of student and working holiday visa holders** from being eligible to apply for a security licence;
- **Reducing red tape** and unnecessary administrative costs

Through its advocacy, ASIAL is seeking to reinvigorate the Council of Australia's Governments agreement in 2008 to implement a nationally consistent approach to regulation of the private security industry, including cyber security professionals.

With a workforce of more than 200,000, the private security industry performs a vital and ever-growing role as part of Australia's national security mix, with cyber security an increasingly important component of this.

The establishment of nationally consistent professional standards for all sectors of the rapidly growing private security industry (protective, electronic, physical and cyber) will contribute to strengthening law enforcement capabilities.

In its deliberations, ASIAL is urging the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement to take into consider the vital role the private security industry performs in detecting, deterring and responding to cybercrime.

We appreciate your attention to these concerns and welcome the opportunity for further discussion or clarification on any of the points raised in this submission.

Thank you for your consideration.

Your sincerely

Chief Executive Officer