

Submission from Mrs Jean Williams

30 April 2000

Dear Sir

ASIO PUBLIC REPORTING:

As a mother of conscript infantry medic, South Vietnam 1968/9 who was awarded the Military Medal for saving many lives under fire, I submit the following:

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation -

This necessary intelligence-gathering organisation needs to lift its game if public confidence is to be restored after the questionable performance over the past years -And the illegal activities it performed during the Vietnam war against mothers of veterans who marched in protest, and were filmed as I was in Adelaide during 1968 at my son's request. He was then in Vietnam...

SPYING ON MOTHERS OF THE REVOLUTION - Adelaide Advertiser 1. 1.2000 I was in the march when we were photographed and numbered.

SPY PHOTOS USED ON WAR MILITANTS - Herald Sun 1. 1.2000 Are you on AS10's files?

ASIO's reporting fails to reach the standard of public reporting, and that is often less than truthful. - During the Vietnam 'conflict', for it was never gazetted as a 'war' either by Australia or the United States of American and her allies, most Australian journalists followed the falling dominoes line, unquestioning...

When public reporting by ASIO staff has to resort to undermining lives of respectable Australians, with the slanted half-truths we have been so far offered, it is a sad time indeed. ASIO never explained to me why my phone was tapped, and when protestors asked we were told in the press that it was not happening. That type of reporting has to stop, and now!

When I asked for my file on Vietnam days the answer was that under the Archives Act of 1983, right of public access is from the first calendar year after that I which the files are thirty years old -and could be extended at the behest of a Federal public servant who never had a son conscripted to fight and risk his life in an undeclared war he did not believe in.

The Sydney Morning Herald 21.7.1992, magazine supplement details some Australian icons who ASIO held files on. They included Sir Zelman Cowan, artist Lloyd Rees, Rev (now Sir) Alan Walker, Uniting Church leader - actor Peter Finch and even our well-loved Chips Rafferty.. Little wonder ASIO has to lift its public image by truthful reporting and enlarge the pitiful amount of reporting on all aspects of their work which should be public knowledge.

There was some reportage of the unfortunate suicide of one of Andrew Peacock's Australian Embassy Staff in Washington. However the public was entitled to more and had to wait until television filled in some gaps. And ASIO has nothing to be proud of with the escape from Canberra of the young turk who fled to north America with a

swagful of 'secrets' - not good enough. We need an intelligence service that Australians can trust to perform adequately. Certainly not the Vietnam era cops and robbers, where the innocents were under scrutiny, falsely, and the agents had fun and games following the McCarthy-type investigations.

ASIO's public reporting urgently needs upgrading, with journalists of good repute and not political stooges, as they certainly were in the Liberal/Country Party era of the Vietnam debacle. My then boss, Clyde Cameron (Labor, Hindmarsh) has a file, data range 1951-1961, yet in 1991 Dr Gregory Pemberton and David McKnight were told there was no ASIO file on Mr Cameron. This was referred to the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security for investigation. This is just one instance of less than truthful reporting to members of the Australian public of ASIO's activities. The tip of the iceberg, no doubt.

When the Prime Minister presented my COMMONWEALTH SENIOR ACHIEVERS AWARD in Canberra on 30 September, 1999, he added "And may God bless you... The award was for writing three books on my family's part in the conflict and exposure to toxic chemicals of our troops. And with two other Australian Human Rights Awards for previous books, I'm hardly a 'security risk.' Maybe ASIO feels any person who protests in good faith is such a risk. If so, all those who were in office in that period should be sacked forthwith and their names be available to we who suffered at their grubby hands.

Mrs Jean R Williams

And I do hope that Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Bruce Scott, is not on the Committee for in his office he has been worse than useless towards many Vietnam veterans suffering disabilities, as my son does, from Operation Ranch Hand