



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

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The Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD
Parliament House
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Dear Committee members

RE REVIEW OF ASIO'S DETENTION AND QUESTIONING POWERS

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is the global organisation of journalists and represents over 500,000 journalists in over 110 countries.

The IFJ is aware of the amendments made to the *Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation Act 1979* in 2003, and understand that the Committee is reviewing these amendments.

The IFJ has documented a pattern of governments around the world using the so-called war on terror to clamp down on civil liberties and press freedom. The IFJ is deeply concerned that the amendments made to the ASIO Act in 2003 go too far and effectively prohibit public debate in Australia about your security organisation's operations.

The IFJ is concerned that the Australian Government has introduced legislation that could see journalists jailed in Australia for five years for reporting information about ASIO, even if it is demonstrably in the public interest. We are also deeply concerned that this may open the way for other Government bodies to be immunised from such public scrutiny. Public institutions must be accountable and open to public scrutiny.

In a democratic society, it is important that national security is balanced with civil rights. The IFJ believes that through these amendments, the Australian Government has lost this balance, to the detriment of media freedom and the public's right to know.

I urge your committee to recommend that the legislation's sunset clause 34Y be observed and that Division III of the Act ceases to have effect.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aidan White', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*General Secretary
International Federation of Journalists*