

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANISATION

Question No. 101

Senator Ludlam asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2008:

In relation to reports in the media over the last week of State police services undertaking covert surveillance and infiltration of peace, environment and animal rights groups:

- a) to what degree does ASIO undertake surveillance of such groups, and
- b) does ASIO have a specific current focus on climate change campaigners?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) observes strictly the provisions of section 17A of the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979* (the ASIO Act) which states that the ASIO Act shall not limit the right of persons to engage in lawful advocacy, protest or dissent, and the exercise of that right shall not, by itself, be regarded as prejudicial to security.

ASIO targets activities and behaviour patterns that may constitute a threat to security as defined in the ASIO Act. ASIO does not target particular groups or individuals, unless there is a security-related reason to do so.